L. SPRAGUE de CAMP

YEARS IN THE MAKING

The Time-Travel Stories of L. Sprague de Camp

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L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP VOLUME I

Years in the Making collects L. Sprague de Camp's best time travel and alternate history stories—which means it brings together some of the best ever written into one book.

In possibly the best-known story of alternate history ever written, *Lest Darkness Fall*, Martin Padway, a young archeologist, accidentally goes back to ancient Rome just before the barbarians were to finally extinguish civilization in the West. What's a man to do? Change history and prevent darkness from falling! (How does he do it? Hint: He starts by inventing brandy.)

"The Wheels of If" tells of a man who finds himself transported to an alternate world where Irish explorers discovered and settled America a thousand years ago, while "Aristotle and the Gun" is the memoir of a man who went back to ancient Greece to start a scientific revolution by teaching Aristotle about modern science. "The Gnarly Man" tells us about another time-traveler who went 50,000 years into the future—the hard way.

Enjoy L. Sprague de Camp's wonderful set of stories about time-travel—forwards, backwards, and sideways!

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The Time-Travel Stories of L. Sprague de Camp

L. Sprague de Camp, Volume 1

edited by Mark L. Olson

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Copyright 2005 by Harry Turtledove

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Years in the Making

The Time-Travel Stories of L. Sprague de Camp

L. Sprague de Camp, Volume 1

Introduction
by Harry Turtledove

L. Sprague de Camp wrote science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, nonfiction mostly centered on science and technology, and elegant light verse. In a career spanning more than half a century, he acquired a well-deserved reputation for realism, accuracy, precision, clarity, logic, and wry wit. The time-travel stories and articles collected here, several of them recognized as classics in the field, show him at the top of his form.

Lest Darkness Fall, which drops a modern American archaeologist in Italy back in time to the early sixth century A.D., is one of the best *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*-type stories ever written, one of the few that can stand beside Mark Twain's magnificent prototype without embarrassment. It has been continuously in print since its original publication in 1939, a record few novels can match. One of the chief differences between de Camp and Twain is de Camp's rueful recognition that things can go wrong for a time traveler. Martin Padway, his hero, has trouble making paper that takes ink without blotting it. He never does succeed in producing a working clock or gunpowder that goes *boom* instead of *fizz.* His personal relationships also go less smoothly than he would like. He is a very human hero, not the superman too common in science fiction, and holds our interest all the more because of that.

Parenthetically, I might note that *Lest Darkness Fall* profoundly changed my own life when I found a copy in a secondhand bookstore at about the age of fifteen. Before that time, I don't think I'd ever heard of the Byzantine Empire. The book fascinated me, and I started trying to find out how much de Camp was making up and how much was real. As a result, I ended up with a doctorate in Byzantine history. Much of what I've written is directly influenced by that, and much else indirectly so. I also met my wife while I was teaching history at UCLA, so the book affected not only my career but my personal life.

"The Wheels of If" is one of the seminal novellas of alternate history. It transports a rather vain and aggressive attorney from our timeline to the body of Bishop Ib Scoglund—the man he would have been—in a world where Roman Catholicism did not triumph over the Celtic variant and where the Muslims won the Battle of Tours instead of losing it, as they did in real history. In this world, North America was settled by the Vikings in the northern route, and the Native Americans—Skrellings—acquired enough technology to retain their independence in most of the continent. It is also a world where the Norman Conquest did not happen, and its English has far fewer Latin- and French-based words than ours.

De Camp writes his dialogue in this challenging other-worldly English, and never falls out of it. In this world, (steam-powered) "airplanes" are "airwanes," "indecent exposure" is "shameful outputting," and an accent is a "word-tone." Some years ago, I had the privilege of writing "The Pugnacious Peacemaker," a sequel to "The Wheels of If." Working out Anglo-Saxon equivalents for Latin- and other Romance language-based terms was a never-ending struggle. So was making sure I didn't absentmindedly slip. I was just about to send the manuscript to my editor when I noticed, right in the middle of page one, the word "second" in dialogue. Out it went, to be replaced by "twoth."

"Aristotle and the Gun" is a fine specimen of the for-want-of-a-nail story: a small change in the past producing enormous ramifications as the centuries roll by. A time-traveler goes back to ancient Greece to give Aristotle—then tutoring Alexander the Great—a glimpse of modern technology. Aristotle is less impressed than the time-traveler hopes he would be, while Alexander and his teenage comrades (many of whom would become the great marshals of the Hellenistic world) harass the modern man until he has to shoot his way clear of them to get back to his time machine—which returns him to a vastly different world. His presence in the past had changed Alexander's course of conquest, and the changes in that affected everything that followed. Again, things aren't so easy as the time-traveler thought they would be before undertaking his journey—a common theme in de Camp's work.

"A Gun for Dinosaur," another classic, sends hunters back into the Cretaceous after *Tyrannosaurus rex*. This piece is at the same time a fine character study, a meditation on time-travel paradoxes (here treated as something the continuum seeks to avoid rather than a likely result of voyaging into the past), and a splendid re-creation of a vanished world. De Camp makes the reader feel the heat and humidity of the world to which Reginald Rivers and his band of hunters are transported—and feel the bites from insects with mouthparts evolved to pierce dinosaur hide. He does a masterful job of discussing the difficulties inherent in hunting extinct behemoths with weapons small enough for one man to handle. When troubles arise, they do so as a natural consequence of the characters' personalities, and are more moving

and convincing because of that. "A Gun for Dinosaur" has also aged very well, despite the vast increase in paleontological knowledge in the past half-century.

"In Language for Time Travelers," de Camp asks a question that does not seem to have occurred to anyone before him: once we get into the past—or, for that matter, into the future—how do we communicate with the people we find there? Languages, as he points out, change over time. Modern English would seem strange to a man of Shakespeare's time, bizarre and only vaguely comprehensible to a man of Chaucer's day, and another tongue altogether to one from King Alfred's time. He also notes that such shifts of sound, grammar, and usage will certainly continue in the future, with modern speech becoming first quaint and then, inevitably, a dead language. Seeing problems no one else has noticed is one of the hallmarks of genius. In this collection, the NESFA Press does sf a great service by gathering together the time-travel tales of a writer less appreciated than he might have been, not least because of his modesty and reluctance of blow his own horn.

The Wheels of If

King Oswiu of Northumbria squirmed in his chair.

In the first place these synods bored him. In the second, his mathematics comprised the ability to add and subtract numbers under twenty on his fingers. Hence all this argument among the learned clerics, assembled in Whitby in the year of Our Lord 664, about the date of Easter and the phases of the moon and cycles of 84 and 532 years, went over the King's head completely.

What did the exact date of Easter matter, anyhow? If they wanted to, why couldn't the Latins celebrate their Easter when they wanted, and the Ionans celebrate theirs? The Ionans had been doing all right, as far as Oswiu could see. And then this Wilfrid of York had to bring in his swarms of Latin priests, objecting to this and that as schismatic, heretical, etc. They were abetted by Oswiu's queen, Eanfled, which put poor Oswiu in an awkward position. He not only wanted peace in the family, but also hoped to attain to Heaven some day. Moreover, he liked the Abbot Colman, leader of the Ionans. And he certainly didn't want any far-off Bishop of Rome sticking his nose into his affairs. On the other hand . . .

King Oswiu came to with a jerk. Father Wilfrid was speaking to him directly: ". . . the arguments of my learned friend—" he indicated the Abbot Colman of Lindisfarne "—are very ingenious, I admit. But that is not the fundamental question. The real decision is, shall we accept the authority of His Holiness of Rome, like good Christians, or—"

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," interrupted Oswiu. "Why must we accept Gregory's authority to be good Christians? I'm a good Christian, and I don't let any foreign—"

"The question, my lord, is whether one can be a good Christian and a rebel against—"

"I am too a good Christian!" bristled Oswiu.

Wilfrid of York smiled. "Perhaps you remember the statement of our Savior to Peter, the first Bishop of Rome? 'Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my

Church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.' You see?"

Oswiu thought. That put a different light on the matter. If this fellow Peter actually had the keys of Heaven . . .

He turned to the Abbot Colman and asked: "Is that a correct quotation?"

"It is, my lord. But—"

"Just a minute, just a minute. You'll get me all confused again if you start arguing. Now, can you quote a text showing that equivalent powers were granted to Saint Columba?"

The grave Irishman's face registered sudden dismay. He frowned in concentration so intense that one could almost hear the wheels.

"Well?" said Oswiu. "Speak up!"

Colman sighed. "No, my lord, I cannot. But I can show that it is the Latins, not we, who are departing from—"

"That's enough, Colman!" Oswiu's single-track mind, once made up, had no intention of being disturbed again. "I have decided that from this day forth the Kingdom of Northumbria shall follow the Latin practice concerning Easter. And that we shall declare our allegiance to the Roman Bishop Gregory, lest, when I come to the gates of Heaven, there would be none to open them for me—he being my adversary who holds the keys. The synod is adjourned."

King Oswiu went out, avoiding the reproachful look that the Abbot sent after him. It was a dirty trick on Colman, who was a very decent chap. But after all, it wouldn't do to antagonize the heavenly doorman. And maybe now Eanfled would stop nagging him . . .

Allister Park rubbed his eyes and sat up in bed, as he usually did. He noticed nothing wrong until he looked at the sleeve of his pajamas.

He could not recall ever having had a pair of pajamas of that singularly repulsive green. He couldn't recall having changed to clean pajamas the night before. In short, he couldn't account for these pajamas at all.

Oh, well, probably, Eunice or Mary had given them to him, and he'd put them on without thinking. He yawned, brushing his mouth with the back of his hand.

He jerked his hand away. Then he cautiously felt his upper lip.

He got out of bed and made for the nearest mirror. There was no doubt about it. He had a mustache. He had not had a mustache when he went to bed the night before.

'Abd-ar-Rahman, Governor of Cordoba for the Khalifah Hisham ibn 'Abd-al-Malik, Lord of Damascus, Protector of the Faithful, etc., etc., paced his tent like a

caged leopard with claustrophobia. He hated inactivity, and to him the last six days of tentative skirmishing had been just that.

He glowered over his pepper-and-salt beard at his chiefs, sitting cross-legged in an ellipse on the rugs. "Well?" he barked.

Yezid spoke up. "But a little longer, Commander-in-Chief, and the Franks will melt away. The infidels have little cavalry, save Gothic and Aquitanian refugees. Without cavalry, they cannot keep themselves fed. Our horse can range the country, supplying us and cutting off help from our enemies. There is no God but God."

Ya'qub snorted. "How long do you think our men will abide this fearful Frankish climate? The winter is almost upon us. I say strike now, while their spirits are still up. This rabble of Frankish farmers on foot will show some rare running. Have the armies of the Faithful come this far by sitting in front of their enemies and making grimaces at them?"

Yezid delivered an impressive snort of his own. "Just the advice one would expect from a dog of a Ma'ddite. This Karel, who commands the infidels, is no fool—"

"Who's a dog?" yelped Ya'qub, jumping up. "Pig of a Yemenite—"

'Abd-ar-Rahman yelled at them until they subsided. One major idea of this foray into Francia was to bury the animosity between members of the two parties. Yezid' s starting a quarrel on political grounds put the Governor in an embarrassing position, as he was a Yemenite himself. He was still undecided. An intelligent man, he could see the sense to Yezid's Fabian advice. Emotionally, however, he burned to get to grips with the army of Charles, Mayor of Austrasia. And Yezid should be punished for his insulting remark.

"I have decided," said 'Abd-ar-Rahman, "that, while there is much to be said on both sides, Ya' qub' s advice is the sounder. Nothing hurts an army's spirit like waiting. Besides, God has planned the outcome of the battle anyway. So why should we fear? If He decides that we shall win, we shall win.

"Therefore tomorrow, Saturday, we shall strike the Franks with all our force. God is God, and Mohammed is His prophet . . ."

But the next night 'Abd-ar-Rahman lay dead by the banks of the River Vienne, near Tours, with his handsome face waxy in the starlight and blood in his pepper-and-salt beard. The Austrasian line had held. Yezid, who had been right, was dead likewise, and so was Ya'qub, who had been wrong. And the surviving Arabs were fleeing back to Narbonne and Barcelona.

Allister Park opened the door of his apartment and grabbed up his *Times*. Sure enough, the date was Monday, April eleventh, just as it ought to have been. The year was right, too. That ruled out the possibility of amnesia.

He went back to the mirror. He was still a slightly stout man in his middle thirties, with pale-blue eyes and thinning sandy hair. But he wasn't the same

man. The nose was different. So were the eyebrows. The scar under the chin was gone . . .

He gave up his self-inspection and got out of his clothes. At that juncture he got another shock. The clothes weren't his. Or rather, they were clothes for a man of his size, and of the quality that a self-indulgent bachelor with an income of $12,000 a year would buy. Park didn't object to the clothes. It was just that they weren't *his* clothes.

Park gave up speculation about his sanity for the nonce; he had to get dressed. Breakfast? He was sick of the more cardboard-like cereals. To hell with it; he'd make himself some French toast. If it put another inch on his middle, he'd sweat it off Sunday at the New York Athletic Club.

The mail was thrust under his door. He finished knotting his necktie and picked it up. The letters were all addressed to a Mr. Arthur Vogel.

Then Allister Park, really awake, did look around. The apartment was built on the same plan as his own, but it wasn't the same. The furniture was different. Lots of little things were different, such as a nick in the wall that shouldn't be there.

Park sat down and smoked a cigarette while he thought. There was no evidence of kidnapping, which, considering his business, was not too unlikely a possibility. He'd gone to bed Sunday night sober, alone, and reasonably early. Why should he wake up in another man's apartment? He forgot for the moment that he had also awakened with another man's face. Before he had time to remember it, the sight of the clock jostled him into action. No time for French toast—it would have to be semi-edible cardboard after all.

But the real shock awaited him when he looked for his briefcase. There was none. Neither was there any sign of the sheaf of notes he had so carefully drawn up on the conduct of the forthcoming Antonini case. That was more than important. On his convicting the Antonini gang depended his nomination for District Attorney for the County of New York next fall. The present D. A. was due to get the bipartisan nomination to the Court of General Sessions at the same time.

He was planning, with thoroughly dishonorable motives, to invite Martha up for dinner. But he didn't want to have dinner with her until he'd cleared this matter up. The only trouble with calling her up was that the address-book didn't have her name in it—or indeed the name of anybody Park had ever heard of. Neither was he listed in the phone book.

He dialed CAnal 6-5700. Somebody said: "Department of Hospitals."

"Huh? Isn't this CAnal 6-5700?"

"Yes, this is the Department of Hospitals."

"Well what's the District Attorney's office then? Hell, I ought to know my own office phone."

"The District Attorney's office is WOrth 2-2200."

Park groggily called WOrth 2-2200. "Mr. Park's office, please."

"What office did you ask for, please?"

"The office of Assistant District Attorney Park!" Park's voice took on the metallic rasp. "Racket Bureau to you, sister."

"I'm sorry, we have no such person."

"Listen, young lady, have you got a Deputy Assistant D.A. named Frenczko? John Frenczko? You spell it with a z."

Silence. "No, I'm sorry, we have no such person."

Allister Park hung up.

The old building at 137 Center was still there. The Racket Bureau was still there. But they had never heard of Allister Park. They already had an Assistant D. A. of their own, a man named Hutchison, with whom they seemed quite well satisfied. There was no sign of Park's two deputies, Frenczko and Burt.

As a last hope, Park went over to the Criminal Courts Building. If he wasn't utterly mad, the case of People v. Cassidy, extortion, ought to come up as soon after ten as it would take Judge Segal to read his calendar. Frenczko and Burt would be in there, after Cassidy's hide.

But there was no Judge Segal, no Frenczko, no Burt, no Cassidy . . .

"Very interesting, Mr. Park," soothed the psychiatrist. "Very interesting indeed. The most hopeful feature is that you quite realize your difficulty, and come to me now—"

"What I want to know," interrupted Park, "is: was I sane up to yesterday, and crazy since then, or was I crazy up to then and sane now?"

"It seems hard to believe that one could suffer from a coherent set of illusions for thirty-six years," replied the psychiatrist "Yet your present account of your perceptions seems rational enough. Perhaps your memory of what you saw and experienced today is at fault."

"But I want to get straightened out! My whole political future depends on it! At least—" he stopped. *Was* there such an Antonini gang? *Was* there a nomination awaiting an Allister Park if they were convicted?

"I know," said the psychiatrist gently. "But this case isn't like any I ever heard of. You go ahead and wire Denver for Allister Park's birth-certificate. We'll see if there is such a person. Then come back tomorrow . . ."

Park awoke, looked around, and groaned. The room had changed again. But he choked off his groan. He was occupying a twin bed. In its mate lay a fair-to-middling handsome woman of about his own age.

His groan had roused her. She asked: "How are you feeling, Wally?"

"I'm feeling fine," he mumbled. The significance of his position was soaking in. He had some trouble suppressing another groan. About marriage, he

was an adherent of the why-buy-a-cow philosophy, as he had had occasion to make clear to many women by way of fair warning.

"I hope you are," said the woman anxiously. "You acted so queer yesterday. Do you remember your appointment with Dr. Kerr?"

"I certainly do," said Park. Kerr was not the name of the psychiatrist with whom he had made the appointment.

The woman prepared to dress. Park gulped a little. For years he'd managed to get along without being mixed up with other men's wives, ever since . . .

And he wished he knew her name. A well-mannered man, under those circumstances, wouldn't refer to the woman as "Hey, you."

"What are we having for breakfast, sweetie-pie?" he asked with a sickly grin.

She told him, adding: "You never called me that before, dear." When she started toward him with an expectant smile, he jumped out of bed and dressed with frantic haste.

He ate silently. When the woman inquired why, he pointed to his mouth and mumbled: "Canker sore. It hurts to talk."

He fled as soon as he decently could, without learning his "wife's" name. His wallet told him his name was Wallace Heineman, but little else about himself. If he wanted to badly enough, he could no doubt find out whom he worked for, who his friends were, which if any bank he had money in, etc. But if these daily changes were going to continue, it hardly seemed worth while. The first thing was to get back to that psychiatrist.

Although the numbers of the streets were different, the general layout was the same. Half an hour's walking brought him to the block where the psychiatrist's office had been. The building had been on the southeast corner of Fifty-seventh and Eighth. Park could have sworn the building that now occupied that site was different.

However, he went up anyway. He had made a careful note of the office number. His notebook had been missing that morning, like all the rest of his (or rather Arthur Vogel's) things. Still, he remembered the number.

The number turned out to be that of a suite of offices occupied by Williamson, Ostendorff, Cohen, Burke, and Williamson, Attorneys. No, they had never heard of Park's brain-man. Yes, Williamson, Ostendorff, Cohen, Burke, and Williamson had occupied those offices for years.

Park came out into the street and stood a long time, thinking. A phenomenon that he had hitherto noticed only vaguely now puzzled him: the extraordinary number of Union Jacks in sight.

He asked the traffic cop about it. The cop looked at him. "King's birthday," he said.

"What king?"

"Why, *our* king of course. David the Fuist." The cop touched his finger to the peak of his cap.

Park settled himself on a park bench with a newspaper. The paper was full of things like references to the recent Anglo-Russian war, the launching of the *Queen Victoria,* His Majesty's visit to a soap factory ("where he displayed a keen interest in the technical problems involved in . . ."), the victory of Massachusetts over Quebec in the Inter-Colonial football matches (Massachusetts a colony? And football in April?), the trial of one Diedrichs for murdering a man with a cross-cut saw . . .

All this was very interesting, especially the Diedrichs case. But Allister Park was more concerned with the whereabouts and probable fate of the *Antonini* gang. He also thought with gentle melancholy of Mary and Eunice and Dorothy and Martha and Joan and . . . But that was less important than the beautiful case he had dug up against such a slimy set of public enemies. Even Park, despite the cynical view of humanity that public prosecutors get, had felt a righteous glow when he tallied up the evidence and knew he had them.

And the nomination was not to be sneezed at either. It just happened that he was available when it was a Protestant's turn at that nomination. If he missed out, he'd have to wait while a Catholic and a Jew took theirs. Since you had to be one or the other to get nominated at all, Park had become perforce a church member and regular if slightly hypocritical goer.

His plan was, after a few terms as D. A., to follow the incumbent D. A. onto the bench. You would never have guessed it, but inside Allister Park lingered enough of the idealism that as a young lawyer he had brought from Colorado to give the bench an attractiveness not entirely comprised of salary and social position.

He looked in his pockets. There was enough there for one good bender.

Of the rest of the day, he never could remember much afterwards. He did remember giving a pound note to an old woman selling shoe-laces, leading a group of drunks in a song about one Columbo who knew the world was round-o (unexpurgated), and trying to take a fireman's hose away from him on the ground that the city was having a water shortage.

He awoke in another strange room, without a trace of a hangover. A quick look-around assured him that he was alone.

It was time, he thought, that he worked out a system for the investigation of his identity on each successive morning. He learned that his name was Wadsworth Noe. The pants of all the suits in his closet were baggy knee-pants, plus-fours.

Something was going *ping, ping, ping,* like one of those tactful alarm clocks. Park located the source of the noise in a goose-necked gadget on the table, which he finally identified as a telephone. As the transmitter and receiver were built into a single unit on the end of the goose-neck, there was nothing to lift off the hook. He pressed a button in the base. A voice spoke: "Waddy?"

"Oh—yeah. Who's this?"

"This is your little bunnykins."

Park swore under his breath. The voice sounded female and young, and had a slight indefinable accent. He stalled: "How are you this morning?"

"Oh, I'm fine. How's my little butter-ball?"

Park winced. Wadsworth Noe had a figure even more portly than Allister Park's. Park, with effort, infused syrup into his voice: "Oh, I'm fine too, sweetie-pie. Only I'm lonesome as all hell."

"Oh, isn't that too bad! Oo poor little thing! Shall I come up and cook dinner for my precious?"

"I'd love it." A plan was forming in Park's mind. Hitherto all these changes had taken place while he was asleep. If he could get somebody to sit around and watch him while he stayed up . . .

The date was made. Park found he'd have to market.

On the street, aside from the fact that all the men wore plus-fours and wide-brimmed hats, the first thing that struck him was the sight of two dark men in uniform. They walked in step down the middle of the sidewalk.

Their walk implied that they expected people to get out of their way. People got. As the soldiers passed him, Park caught a sentence in a foreign language, sounding like Spanish.

At the market everyone spoke with that accent Park had heard over the phone. They fell silent when another pair of soldiers entered. These loudly demanded certain articles of food. A clerk scurried around and got the order. The soldiers took the things and departed without paying.

Park thought of going to a library to learn about the world he was in. But if he were going to shift again, it would hardly be worth while. He bought a *New York Record,* noticing that the stand also carried a lot of papers in French and Spanish.

Back in his apartment he read of His Majesty Napoleon V, apparently emperor of New York City and God knew what else!

His little bunnykins turned out to be a smallish dark girl, not bad-looking, who kissed him soundly. She said: "Where have you been the last few days, Waddy? I haven't heard from you for simply *ages!* I was beginning to think you'd forgotten me. Oo hasn't forgotten, has oo?"

"Me forget? Why, sweetie-pie, I couldn't any more forget you than I could forget my own name." (And what the hell's that? he asked himself.

Wordsworth—no, Wadsworth Noe. Thank God.) "Give us another kiss."

. . . She looked at him. "What makes you talk so funny, Waddy?"

"Canker sore," said Allister Park.

"O-o-o, you poor angel. Let me see it."

"It's all right. How about that famous dinner?"

At least Wadsworth Noe kept a good cellar. After dinner Park applied himself cautiously to this. It gave an excuse for just sitting. Park asked the girl about herself. She chattered on happily for some hours.

Then the conversation began to run dry. There were long silences.

She looked at him quizzically. "Are you worrying about something, Waddy? Somehow you seem like a different man."

"No," he lied. "I'm not worrying."

She looked at the clock. "I suppose I ought to go," she said hesitantly.

Park sat up. "Oh, please don't!"

She relaxed and smiled. "I didn't *think* you'd let me. Just wait." She disappeared into the bedroom and presently emerged in a filmy nightgown.

Allister Park was not surprised. But he was concerned. Attractive as the girl was, the thought of solving his predicament was more so. Besides, he was already sleepy from the liquors he had drunk.

"How about making some coffee, sweetie-pie?" be asked.

She acquiesced. The making and drinking of the coffee took another hour. It was close to midnight. To keep the ball rolling, Park told some stories. Then the conversation died down again. The girl yawned. She seemed puzzled and a bit resentful.

She asked: "Are you going to sit up all night?"

That was just what Park intended to do. But while he cast about for a plausible reason to give, he stalled: "Ever tell you about that man Wugson I met last week? Funniest chap you ever saw. He has a big bunch of hairs growing out the end of his nose . . ."

He went on in detail about the oddities of the imaginary Mr. Wugson. The girl had an expression of what-did-I-do-to-deserve-this. She yawned again.

Click! Allister Park rubbed his eyes and sat up. He was on a hard knobby thing that might, by gross misuse of the language, be called a mattress. His eyes focused on a row of iron bars.

He was in jail.

Allister Park's day in jail proved neither interesting nor informative. He was marched out for meals and for an hour of exercise. Nobody spoke to him except a guard who asked: "Hey there, chief, who ja think you are today, huh? Julius Caesar?"

Park grinned. "Nope. I'm God, this time."

This was getting to be a bore. If one could do this flitting about from existence to existence voluntarily, it might be fun. As it was, one didn't stay put long enough to adjust oneself to any of these worlds of illusion?

The next day he was a shabby fellow sleeping on a park bench. The city was still New York—no it wasn't; it was a different city built on the site of New York.

He had money for nothing more than a bottle of milk and a loaf of bread. These he bought and consumed slowly, while reading somebody's discarded newspaper. Reading was difficult because of the queer spelling. And the people had an accent that required the closest attention to understand.

He spent a couple of hours in an art museum. The guards looked at him as if he were something missed by the cleaners. When it closed he went back to his park bench and waited. Night came.

A car—at least, a four-wheeled power vehicle—drew up and a couple of cops got out. Park guessed they were cops because of their rhinestone epaulets. One asked: "Are you John Gilby?" He pronounced it: "Air yew Zhawn Gilbü?"

But Allister Park caught his drift. "Damned if I know, brother. Am I?"

The cops looked at each other. "He's him, all right," said one. To Park: "Come along."

Park learned, little by little, that he was not wanted for anything more serious than disappearance. He kept his own counsel until they arrived at the stationhouse.

Inside was a fat woman. She jumped up and pointed at him, crying raucously: "That's him! That's the dirty deserter, running off and leaving his poor wife to starve! The back of me hand to you, you dirty—"

"Please, Mrs. Gilby!" said the desk sergeant.

The woman was not to be silenced. "Heaven curse the day I met you! Sergeant darlin', what can I do to put the dirty loafer in jail where he belongs?"

"Well," said the sergeant uncomfortably, "you can charge him with desertion, of course. But don't you think you'd better go home and talk it over? We don't want to—"

"Hey!" cried Park. They looked at him. "I'll take jail, if you don't mind—"

Click! Once again he was in bed. It was a real bed this time. He looked around. The place had the unmistakable air of a sanitarium or hospital.

Oh, well. Park rolled over and went to sleep.

The next day he was still in the same place. He began to have hopes. Then he remembered that, as the transitions happened at midnight, he had no reason for assuming that the next one would not happen the following midnight.

He spent a very boring day. A physician came in, asked him how he was, and was gone almost before Park could say "Fine." People brought him his

meals. If he'd been sure he was going to linger, he'd have made vigorous efforts to orient himself and to get out. But as it was, there didn't seem any point.

The next morning he was still in bed. But when he tried to rub his eyes and sit up, be found that his wrists and ankles were firmly tied to the four posts. This wasn't the same bed, nor the same room; it looked like a room in somebody's private house.

And at the foot of the bed sat the somebody; a small gray-haired man with piercing black eyes that gleamed over a sharp nose.

For a few seconds Allister Park and the man looked at each other. Then the man's expression underwent a sudden and alarming change, as if internal pain had gripped him. He stared at his own clothes as if he had never seen them before. He screamed, jumped up, and dashed out of the room. Park heard his feet clattering down stairs, and the slam of a front door; then nothing.

Allister Park tried pulling at his bonds, but the harder be pulled, the tighter they gripped. So he tried not pulling, which brought no results either.

He listened. There was a faint hiss and purr of traffic outside. He must be still in a city, though, it seemed, a fairly quiet one.

A stair creaked. Park held his breath. Somebody was coming up, and without unnecessary noise. More than one man, Park thought, listening to the creaks.

Somebody stumbled. From far below a voice called up a question that Park couldn't catch. There were several quick steps and the smack of a fist.

The door of Park's room was ajar. Through the crack appeared a vertical strip of face, including an eye. The eye looked at Park and Park looked at the eye.

The door jerked open and three men pounced into the room. They wore floppy trousers and loose blouses that might have come out of a Russian ballet. They had large, flat, pentagonal faces, red-brown skins and straight black hair. They peered behind the door and under the bed.

"What the hell?" asked Allister Park.

The largest of the three men looked at him. "You're not hurt, Hallow?"

"No. But I'm damn sick of being tied up."

The large man's face showed a flicker of surprise. The large man cut Park's lashings. Park sat up, rubbing his wrists, and learned that he was wearing a suit of coarse woolen underwear.

"Where's the rascally Noggle?" asked the large brown man. Although he rolled his r's like a Scot, he did not look like a Scot. Park thought he might be an Asiatic or an American Indian.

"You mean the little gray-haired bird?"

"Sure. You know, the scoundrel." He pronounced the "k" in "know".

"Suppose I do. When I woke up he was in that chair. He looked at me and beat it out of here as if all the bats of Hell were after him."

"Maybe he's gone daft. But the weighty thing is to get you out." One of the men got a suit out of the closet, resembling the three men's clothes, but somber gray.

Allister Park dressed. The tenseness of the men made him hurry, though he didn't take all this very seriously yet.

Working his feet into the elastic-sided shoes with the big metal buckles, Park asked: "How long have I been here?"

"You dropped from the ken of a man a week ago today," replied the large man with a keen look.

A week ago today he had been Allister Park, assistant district attorney. The next day he hadn't been. It was probably not a mere coincidence.

He started to take a look at his new self in the mirror.

Before he could do more than glimpse a week's growth of beard, two of the men were gently pulling his arms toward the door. There was something deferential about their urgency. Park went along. He asked: "What do I do now?"

"That takes a bit of thinking on," said the large man. "It might not be safe for you to go home. Shh!" He stole dramatically down the stairs ahead of them. "Of course," he continued, "you could put in a warrant against Joseph Noggle."

"What good would that do?"

"Not much, I fear. If Noggle was put up to this by MacSvensson, you can be sure the lazy knicks wouldn't find him."

Park had more questions, but he didn't want to give himself away any sooner than he had to.

The house was old, decorated in a curious geometrical style, full of hexagons and spirals. On the ground floor sat another brown man in a rocking chair. In one hand he held a thing like an automobile grease-gun, with a pistol grip. Across the room sat another man, with a black eye, looking apprehensively at the gun-thing.

The one in the chair got up, took off his bonnet, and made a bow toward Park. He said: "Haw, Hallow. Were you hurt?"

"He'll live over it, glory be to Patrick," said the big one, whom the others addressed as "Sachem". This person now glowered at the man with the black eye. "Nay alarums, understand? Or—" he drew the tip of his forefinger in a quick circle on the crown of his head. It dawned on Park that he was outlining the part of the scalp that an Indian might remove as a trophy.

They went quickly out, glancing up and down the street. It was early morning; few people were visible. Park's four companions surrounded him in a way that suggested that, much as they respected him, he had better not make a break.

The sidewalk had a wood-block paving. At the curb stood a well-streamlined automobile. The engine seemed to be in the rear. From the size of the

closed-in section, Park guessed it to be huge.

They got in. The instrument board had more knobs and dials than a transport plane. The Sachem started the car noiselessly. Another car blew a resonant whistle, and passed them wagging a huge tail of water-vapor. Park grasped the fact that the cars were steam-powered. Hence the smooth, silent operation; hence also the bulky engine and the complex controls.

The buildings were large but low; Park saw none over eight or ten stories. The traffic-signals had semaphore arms with "STAI" and "COM" on them.

"Where are you taking me?" asked Park.

"Outside the burg bounds, first," said the Sachem. "Then we'll think on the next."

Park wondered what was up; they were still respectful as all Hell, but there was something ominous about their haste to get outside the "burg bounds", which Park took to be the city limits. He said, experimentally, "I'm half starved."

A couple of the brown men echoed these sentiments, so the Sachem presently stopped the car at a restaurant. Park looked around it; except for that odd geometric style of decoration, it was much like other restaurants the world over.

"What's the program?" he asked the Sachem. Park had known some heavy drinkers in his time, but never one who washed his breakfast pancakes down with whiskey, as the large brown man was now doing.

"That'll be seen," said the Sachem. "What did Noggle try to do to you?"

"Never did find out."

"There's been an under talk about the swapping of minds. I wonder if—where are you going?"

"Be right back," said Park, heading for the men's room. In another minute the Sachem would have cornered him on the question of identity. They watched him go. Once in the men's room, he climbed onto a sink, opened a window, and squirmed out into the adjacent alley. He put several blocks between himself and his convoyors before he slowed down.

His pockets failed to tell him whose body he had. His only mark of identification was a large gold ring with a Celtic cross. He had a few coins in one pocket, wherewith he brought a newspaper.

Careful searching disclosed the following item:

BISJAP STIL MISING

At a læt aur jestrdai nee toocan had ben faund of yi mising Bisjap Ib Scoglund of yi Niu Belfast Bisjapric of yi Celtic Cristjan Tjörtj, hwuuz vanisjing a wiik agoo haz sterd yi börg. Cnicts sai yai aar leeving nee steen öntornd in yæir straif tu faind yi hwarabouts of yi

> mising preetjr, hwuuz lösti swink on bihaaf of yi Screlingz haz bimikst him in a fiirs yingli scöfal . . .

It looked to Park as though some German or Norwegian had tried to spell English—or what passed for English in this city—phonetically according to the rules of his own language, with a little Middle English or Anglo-Saxon thrown in. He made a tentative translation:

> BISHOP STILL MISSING
>
> At a late hour yesterday no token (sign?) had been found of the missing Bishop Ib Scoglund of the New Belfast Bishopric of the Celtic Christian Church, whose vanishing a week ago has stirred the burg (city?). Cnicts (police?) say they are leaving no stone unturned in their strife (effort?) to find the whereabouts of the missing preacher . . .

It sounded like him, all right. What a hell of a name, Ib Scoglund! The next step was to find where he lived. If they had telephones, they ought to have telephone directories . . .

Half an hour later Park approached the bishop's house. If he were going to change again at midnight, the thing to do would be to find some quiet place, relax, and await the change. However, he felt that the events of the week made a pattern, of which he thought he could see the beginnings of an outline. If his guesses were right, he had arrived at his destination.

The air was moderately warm and a bit sticky, as New York City air might well be in April. A woman passed him, leading a floppy-eared dog. She was stout and fiftyish. Although Park did not think that a skirt that cleared her knees by six inches became her, that was what was being worn.

As he turned the corner onto what ought to be his block, he sighted a knot of people in front of a house. Two men in funny steeple-crowned hats sat in an open car. They were dressed alike, and Park guessed they were policemen.

Park pulled his bonnet—a thing like a Breton peasant's hat—over one side of his face. He walked past on the opposite side of the street, looking unconcerned. The people were watching No. 64, his number.

There was an alley on one side of the house. Park walked to the next corner, crossed, and started back toward No. 64. He had almost reached the entrance to the alley when one of the men spotted him. With a cry of "There's the bishop himself!" the men on the sidewalk—there were four—ran toward him. The men in the funny hats got out of their vehicle and followed.

Park squared his shoulders. He had faced down ward-heelers who invaded his apartment to tell him to lay off certain people, or else. However, far from

being hostile, these shouted: "Wher-r-re ya been Hallow?" "Were you kidnapped?" "Ja lose your recall?" "How about a wording?" All produced pads and pencils.

Park felt at home. He asked: "Who's it for?"

One of the men said: "I'm from the *Sooth.*"

"The what?"

"The *New Belfast Sooth.* We've been upholding you on the Skrelling question."

Park looked serious. "I've been investigating conditions."

The men looked puzzled. Park added: "You know, looking into things."

"Oh," said the man from the *Sooth.* "Peering the kilters, eh?"

The men in the funny hats arrived. One of the pair asked: "Any wrongdoings, Bishop? Want to mark in a slur?"

Park, fumbling through the mazes of this dialect, figured that he meant "file a complaint." He said: "No, I'm all right. Thanks anyway."

"But," cried the hat, "are you *sure* you don't want to mark in a slur? We'll take you to the lair if you do."

"No, thank you," said Park. The hats sidled up to him, one on either side. In the friendliest manner they took his arms and gently urged him toward the car, saying: "Sure you want to mark in a slur. We was sent special to get you so you could. If somebody kidnapped you, you must, or it's helping wrongdoing, you know. It's just a little way to the lair—"

Park had been doing some quick thinking. They had an ulterior reason for wanting to get him to the "lair" (presumably a police-station); but manhandling a bishop, especially in the presence of reporters, just wasn't done. He wrenched loose and jumped into the doorway of No. 64. He snapped: "I haven't got any slurs, and I'm not going to your lair, get me?"

"Aw, but Hallow, we wasn't going to hurt you. Only if you have a slur, you have to mark it in. That's the law, see?" The man, his voice a pleading whine, came closer and reached for Park's sleeve. Park cocked a fist, saying: "If you want me for anything, you can get a warrant. Otherwise the *Sooth'll* have a story about how you tried to kidnap the bishop, and how he knocked the living bejesus out of you!" The reporters made encouraging noises.

The hats gave up and got back in their car. With some remark about ". . . he'll sure give us hell," they departed.

Park pulled the little handle on the door. Something went *bong, bong* inside. The reporters crowded around, asking questions. Park, trying to look the way a bishop should, held up a hand. "I'm very tired, gentlemen, but I'll have a statement for you in a few days."

They were still pestering him when the door opened. Inside, a small monkey like fellow opened his mouth. "Hallow Colman keep us from harm!" he cried.

"I'm sure he will," said Park gravely, stepping in. "How about some food?"

"Surely, surely," said Monkey-face. "But—but what on earth has your hallowship been doing? I've been fair sick with worry."

"Peering the kilters, old boy, peering the kilters." Park followed Monkey-face upstairs, as if he had intended going that way of his own accord. Monkey-face doddered into a bedroom and busied himself with getting out clean clothes.

Park looked at a mirror. He was—as he had been throughout his metamorphoses—a stocky man with thinning light hair, in his middle thirties. While he was not Allister Park, neither was he very different from him.

The reddish stubble on his face would have to come off. In the bathroom Park found no razor. He stumbled on a contraption that might be an electric razor. He pushed the switch experimentally, and dropped the thing with a yell.

It had bitten a piece out of his thumb. Holding the injured member, Park cut loose with the condemnatory vocabulary that ten years of work among New York City's criminal class had given him.

Monkey-face stood in the doorway, eyes big. Park stopped his swearing long enough to rasp: "Damn your lousy little soul, don't stand there! Get me a bandage!"

The little man obeyed. He applied the bandage as though he expected Park to begin the practice of cannibalism on him at any moment.

"What's the matter?" said Park. "I won't bite you!"

Monkey-face looked up. "Begging pardon, your hallowship, but I thock you wouldn't allow the swearing of aiths in your presence. And now such frickful aiths I never did hear."

"Oh," said Park. He remembered the penetrating look the Sachem had given his mild damns and hells. Naturally a bishop would not use such language—at least not where he could be overheard.

"You'd better finish my shave," he said.

Monkey-face still looked uneasy. "Begging your forgiveness again, Hallow, but what makes you talk such a queer speech?"

"Canker sore," growled Park.

Shaved, he felt better. He bent a kindly look on Monkey-face. "Listen," he said, "your bishop has been consorting with low uncouth persons for the past week. So don't mind it if I fall into their way of speaking. Only don't tell anybody, see? Sorry I jumped on you just now. D'you accept my apology?"

"Yes—yes, of course, Hallow."

"All right, then. How about that famous breakfast?"

After breakfast he took his newspaper and the pile of mail into the bishop's well-equipped library. He looked up "Screling" in the "Wördbuk" or dictionary. A "Screling" was defined as one of the aboriginal inhabitants of Vinland.

"Vinland" stirred a faint chord; something he'd learned in school. The atlas contained a map of North America. A large area in the north and east thereof, bounded on the west and south by an irregular line running roughly from Charleston to Winnipeg, was labeled the Bretwaldate of Vinland. The remaining two-thirds of the continent comprised half a dozen political areas, with such names as Dacoosja, Tjeroogia, Aztecia. Park, referring back to the dictionary, derived these from Dakota, Cherokee, Aztec, etcetera.

In a couple of hours telephone calls began coming in. Monkey-face, according to his instructions, told one and all that the bishop was resting up and couldn't be disturbed. Park meanwhile located a pack of pipes in the library, and a can of tobacco. He got out several pads of paper and sharpened a dozen pencils.

Monkey-face announced lunch. Park told him to bring it in. He announced dinner. Park told him to bring it in.

He announced bed-time. Park told him to go soak his head. He went, clucking. He had never seen a man work with such a fury of concentration for so long at a stretch, let alone his master. But then, he had never seen Allister Park reviewing the evidence for a big criminal case.

History, according to the encyclopedia, was much the same as Park remembered it down to the Dark Ages. Tracing down the point at which the divergence took place, he located the fact that King Oswiu of Northumbria had decided in favor of the Celtic Christian Church at the Synod of Whitby, 664 AD Park had never heard of the Synod or of King Oswiu. But the encyclopedia ascribed to this decision the rapid spread of the Celtic form of Christianity over Great Britain and Scandinavia. Hence it seemed to Park that probably, in the history of the world *he* had come from, the king had decided the other way.

The Roman Christian Church had held most of its ground in northern Europe for a century more. But the fate of its influence there had been sealed by the defeat of the Franks by the Arabs at Tours. The Arabs had occupied all southern Gaul before they were finally stopped, and according to the atlas they were still there. The Pope and the Lombard duchies of Italy had at once placed themselves under the protection of the Byzantine emperor Leo the Iconoclast. (A Greek-speaking "Roman" Empire still occupied Anatolia and the Balkans, under a Serbian dynasty.)

A Danish king of England named Gorm had brought both the British Isles and Scandinavia under his rule, as Knut had done in Park's world. But Gorm's kingdom proved more durable than Knut's; the connection between England and Scandinavia had survived, despite intervals of disunion and civil war, down to the present. North America was discovered by one Ketil Ingolfsson in 989 AD Enough Norse, English, and Irish colonists had migrated thither during the Eleventh Century to found a permanent colony, from which the

Bretwaldate of Vinland had grown. Their language, while descended from Anglo-Saxon, naturally contained fewer words of Latin and French origin than Park's English.

The Indians—-"Screlingz" or Skrellings—had not proved a pushover, as the colonists had neither the gunpowder nor the numbers that the whites of Park's history had had. By the time the whites had reached the present boundaries of Vinland, expelling or enslaving the Skrellings as they went, the remaining natives had acquired enough knowledge of ferrous metallurgy and organized warfare to hold their own. Those that remained in Vinland were no longer slaves, but were still a suppressed class suffering legal and economic disabilities. He, Bishop Ib Scoglund, was a crusader for the removal of these disabilities. ("Hallow" was simply a respectful epithet, meaning about the same as "Reverend.")

An Italian named Caravello had invented the steam engine about 1790, and the Industrial Revolution had followed as a matter of course . . .

It was the following morning, when Park, having caught the three hours of sleep that sufficed for him when necessary, was back at the books, that Monkey-face (right name: Eric Dunedin) came timidly in. He coughed deferentially. "The pigeon came with a writing from Thane Callahan."

Park frowned up from his mountain of printed matter. "Who? Never mind; let's see it." He took the note. It read (spelling conventionalized):

> Dear Hallow: Why in the name of the Blood Witnesses of Belfast did you run away from us yesterday? The papers say you have gone back home; isn't that risky? Must have a meeting with you forthwith; shall be at Bridget's Beach this noon, waiting. Respectfully, R.C.

Park asked Dunedin: "Tell me, is Callahan a tall heavy guy who looks like an In—a Skrelling?"

Dunedin looked at him oddly. By this time Park was getting pretty well used to being looked at oddly. Dunedin said: "But he *is* a Skrelling, Hallow; the Sachem of all the Skrellings of Vinland."

"Hm. So he'll meet me at this beach—why the devil can't he come here?"

"Ooaoh, but Hallow, bethink what happened to him the last time the New Belfast knicks caught him!"

Whatever that was, Park reckoned he owed the Sachem something for the rescue from the clutches of the mysterious Mr. Noggle. The note didn't sound like one from a would-be abductor to his escaped prey. But just in case, Park went out to the modest episcopal automobile. (Dunedin called it a "wain") and put a wrench in his pocket. He told Dunedin; "You'll have to drive this thing; my thumb's still sore."

It took a few minutes to get steam up. As they rolled out of the driveway, a car parked across the street started up too. Park got a glimpse of the men therein. While they were in civilian clothes, as he was, they had a grim plain-clothesman look about them.

After three blocks the other car was still behind them. Park ordered Dunedin to go around the block. The other car followed.

Park asked: "Can you shake those guys?"

"I—I don't know, your hallowship. I'm not very good at fast driving."

"Slide over then. How in hell do you run this thing?"

"You mean you don't know—"

"Never mind!" roared Park. "Where's the accelerator or throttle or whatever you call it?"

"Oh, the strangle. There." Dunedin pointed a frankly terrified finger. "And the brake—"

The wain jumped ahead with a rush. Park spun it around a couple of corners, getting the feel of the wheel. The mirror showed the other car still following. Park opened the "strangle" and whisked around the next corner. No sooner had he straightened out than he threw the car into another dizzy turn. The tires screeched and Dunedin yelped as they shot into an alleyway. The pursuers whizzed by without seeing them.

An egg-bald man in shirtsleeves popped out of a door in the alley. "Hi," he said, "this ain't no hitching place." He looked at Park's left front fender, clucking. "Looks like you took off some paint."

Park smiled. "I was just looking for a room, and I saw your sign. How much are you asking?"

"Forty-five a month."

Park made a show of writing this down. He asked:

"What's the address, please?"

"One twenty-five Isleif."

"Thanks. I'll be back, maybe." Park backed out, with a scrape of fender against stone, and asked Dunedin directions. Dunedin, gray of face, gave them. Park looked at him and chuckled. "Nothing to be scared of, old boy. I knew I had a good two inches clearance on both sides."

The Sachem awaited Park in the shade of the bathhouse. He swept off his bonnet with a theatrical flourish. "Haw, Hallow! A fair day for our tryst." Park reflected that on a dull day you could smell Rufus Callahan's breath almost as far as you could see Rufus Callahan. He continued: "The west end's best for talk. I have a local knick watching in case Greenfield sends a prowler. Did they follow you out?"

Park told him, meanwhile wondering how to handle the interview so as to make it yield the most information. They passed the end of the bath-house,

and Allister Park checked his stride. The beach was covered with naked men and women. Not *quite* naked; each had a gaily colored belt of elastic webbing around his or her middle. Just that. Park resumed his walk at Callahan's amused look.

Callahan said: "If the head knick, Lewis, weren't a friend of mine, I shouldn't be here. If I ever did get pulled up—well, the judges are all MacSvensson's men, just as Greenfield is." Park remembered that Offa Greenfield was mayor of New Belfast. Callahan continued: "While MacSvensson's away, the pushing eases a little."

"When's he due back?" asked Park.

"In a week maybe." Callahan waved an arm toward distant New Belfast. "What a fair burg, and what a wretched wick to rule it! How do you like it?"

"Why, I live there, don't I?"

Callahan chuckled. "Wonderful, my dear Hallow, wonderful. In another week nobody'll know you aren't his hallowship at all."

"Meaning what?"

"Oh, you needn't look at me with that wooden face. You're nay mair Bishop Scoglund than I am."

"Yeah?" said Park noncommittally. He lit one of the bishop's pipes.

"How about a jinn?" asked Callahan.

Park looked at him, until the Sachem got out a cigarette.

Park lit it for him, silently conceding one to the opposition. How was he to know that a jinn was a match? He asked: "Suppose I was hit on the head?"

The big Skrelling grinned broadly. "That mick spoil your recall, in spots, but it wouldn't give you that frickful word-tone you were using when we befreed you. I see you've gotten rid of most of it, by the way. How did you do that in thirty-some hours?"

Park gave up. The man might be just a slightly drunken Indian with a conspiratorial manner, but he had the goods on Allister. He explained: "I found a bunch of records of some of my sermons, and played them over and over on the machine."

"My, my, you are a cool one! Joe Noggle mick have done worse when he picked your mind to swap with the bishop's. Who are you, in sooth? Or perhaps I should say who *were* you?"

Park puffed placidly. "I'll exchange information, but I won't give it away."

When Callahan agreed to tell Park all he wanted to know, Park told his story. Callahan looked thoughtful. He said: "I'm nay brain-wizard, but they do say there's a theory that every time the history of the world hinges on some decision, there are two worlds, one that which would happen if the card fell one way, the other that which would follow fro the other."

"Which is the *real* one?"

"That I can't tell you. But they do say Noggle can swap minds with his

thocks, and I don't doubt it's swapping between one of these possible worlds and another they mean."

He went on to tell Park of the bishop's efforts to emancipate the Skrellings, in the teeth of the opposition of the ruling Diamond Party. This party's strength was mainly among the rural squirearchy of the west and south, but it also controlled New Belfast through the local boss, Ivor MacSvensson. If Scoglund's amendment to the Bretwaldate's constitution went through at the next session of the national Thing, as seemed likely if the Ruby Party ousted the Diamonds at the forthcoming election, the squirearchy might revolt. The independent Skrelling nations of the west and south had been threatening intervention on behalf of their abused minority. (That sounded familiar to Park, except that, if he took what he had read and heard at its face value, the minority really had something to kick about this time.) The Diamonds wouldn't mind a war, because in that case the elections, which they expected to lose, would be called off . . .

"You're not listening, Thane Park, or should I say Hallow Scoglund?"

"Nice little number," said Park, nodding toward a pretty blonde girl on the beach.

Callahan clucked. "Such a wording from a strict wedless!"

"*What?*"

"You're a pillar of the church, aren't you?"

"Oh, my Lord!" Park hadn't thought of that angle. The Celtic Christian Church, despite its libertarian tradition, was strict on the one subject of sex.

"Anyhow," said Callahan, "what shall we do with you? For you're bound to arouse mistrust."

Park felt the wrench in his pocket. *"I* want to get *back.* Got a whole career going to smash in my own world."

"Unless the fellow who's running your body knows what to do with it."

"Not much chance." Park could visualize Frenczko or Burt frantically calling his apartment to learn why he didn't appear; the unintelligible answers they would get from the bewildered inhabitant of his body; the cops screaming up in the struggle-buggy to cart the said body off to Belle-view; the headline: "PROSECUTOR BREAKS DOWN." So they yanked me here as a bit of dirty politics, eh? I'll get back, but meantime I'll show 'em some *real* politics!"

Callahan continued: "The only man who could unswap you is Joseph Noggle, and he's in his own daffy-bin."

"Huh?"

"They found him wandering about, clean daft. It's a good deed you didn't put in a slur against him; they'd have stripped you in court in nay time."

"Maybe that's what they wanted to do."

"That's an idea! That's why they were so anxious for you to go to the lair. I don't doubt they'll be watching for to pull you up on some little charge; it

won't matter whether you're guilty or not. Once they get hold of you, you're headed for Noggle's inn. What a way to get rid of the awkward bishop without pipe or knife!"

When Callahan had departed with another flourish, Park looked for the girl. She had gone too. The day was blistering, and the water inviting. Since you didn't need a bathing-suit to swim in Vinland, why not try it?

Park returned to the bath-house and rented a locker. He stowed his clothes, and looked at himself in the nearest mirror. The bishop didn't take half enough exercise, he thought, looking at the waistline. He'd soon fix *that*. No excuse for a man's getting out of shape that way.

He strolled out, feeling a bit exposed with his white skin among all these bronzed people, but not showing it in his well-disciplined face. A few stared. Maybe it was his whiteness; maybe they thought they recognized the bishop.

He plunged in and headed out. He swam like a porpoise, but shortness of breath soon reminded him that the bishop's body wasn't up to Allister Park's standards. He cut loose with a few casual curses, since there was nobody to overhear, and swam back.

As he dripped out onto the sand, a policeman approached, thundering: "You! You're under stoppage!"

"What for?"

"Shameful outputting!"

"But look at those!" protested Park, waving at the other bathers.

"That's just it! Come along, now!"

Park went, forgetting his anger in concern as to the best method of avoiding trouble. If the judges were MacSvensson men, and MacSvensson was out to expose him . . . He dressed under the cop's eagle eye, thanking his stars he'd had the foresight to wear nonclerical clothes.

The cop ordered: "Give your name and address to the bookholder."

"Allister Park, 125 Isleif Street, New Belfast."

The clerk filled out a blank; the cop added a few lines to it. Park and the cop went and sat down for a while, waiting. Park watched the legal procedure of this little court keenly.

The clerk called: "Thane Park!" and handed the form up to the judge. The cop went over and whispered to the judge. The judge said: "All women will kindly leave the courtroom!" There were only three; they went out.

"Allister Park," said the judge, "you are marked with shameful outputting. How do you plead?"

"I don't understand this, your honor—I mean your aerness," said Park. "I wasn't doing anything the other people on the beach weren't."

The judge frowned. "Knick Woodson says you afterthockly exposed—

uh—" The judge looked embarrassed. "You afterthockly output your—uh—" He lowered his voice. "Your navel," he hissed. The judge blushed.

"Is that considered indecent?"

"Don't try to be funny. It's not in good taste. I ask you again, how do you plead?"

Park hesitated a second. "Do you recognize the plea of *non vult?*"

"What's that? Latin? We don't use Latin here."

"Well then—a plea that I didn't mean any harm, and am throwing myself on the mercy of the court."

"Oh, you mean a plea of good will. That's not usually used in a freerighter's court, but I don't see why you can't. What's your excuse?"

"You see, your honor, I've been living out in Dakotia for many years, and I've rather gotten out of civilized habits. But I'll catch on quickly enough. If you want a character reference, my friend Ivar MacSvensson will give me one."

The judge's eyebrows went up, like a buzzard hoisting its wings for the take-off. "You ken Thane MacSvensson?"

"Oh, sure!"

"Hrrrmph. Well. He's out of town. But—uh—if that's so, I'm sure you're a good burger. I hereby sentence you to ten days in jail, sentence withheld until I can check your mooding, and thereafter on your good acting. You are free."

Like a good thane's thane, Eric Dunedin kept his curiosity to himself. This became a really heroic task when he was sent out to buy a bottle of soluble hair-dye, a false mustache, and a pair of phony spectacles with flat glass panes in them.

There was no doubt about it; the boss was a changed man since his reappearance. He had raised Dunedin's salary, and except for occasional outbursts of choler treated him very considerately. The weird accent had largely disappeared; but this hard, inscrutable man wasn't the bishop Dunedin had known . . .

Park presented himself in his disguise to the renting agent at 125 Isleif. He said: "Remember me? I was here this morning asking about a room." The man said sure he remembered him; he never forgot a face. Park rented a small two-room apartment, calling himself Allister Park. Later in the evening he took some books, a folder of etchings, and a couple of suitcases full of clothes over. When he returned to the bishop's house he found another car with a couple of large watchful men waiting at the curb. Rather than risk contact with a hostile authority, he went back to his new apartment and read. Around midnight he dropped in at a small hash-house for a cup of coffee. In fifteen minutes he was calling the waitress "sweetie-pie." The etchings worked like a charm.

Dunedin looked out the window and announced: "Two wains and five knicks, Hallow. The twoth wain drew up just now. The men in it look as if they'd eat their own mothers without salt."

Park thought. He had to get out somehow. He had looked into the subject of search warrants, illegal entry, and so forth, as practiced in the Bretwaldate of Vinland, and was reasonably sure the detectives wouldn't invade his house. The laws of Vinland gave what Park thought was an impractically exaggerated sanctity to a man's home, but he was glad of that as things were. However, if he stepped out, the pack would be all over him with charges of drunken driving, conspiracy to violate the tobacco tax, and anything else they could think of.

He telephoned the "knicks' branch," or police department, and spoke falsetto: "Are you the knicks? Glory be to Patrick and Bridget! I'm Wife Caroline Chisholm, at 79 Mercia, and we have a crazy man running up and down the halls naked with an ax. Sure he's killed my poor husband already; spattered his brains all over the hall he did, and I'm locked in my room and looking for him to break in any time." Park stamped on the floor, and continued: "Eeek! That's the monster now, trying to break the door down. Oh, hurry, I pray. He's shouting that he's going to chop me in little bits and feed me to his cat! . . . Yes, 79 Mercia. Eeeee! Save me!"

He hung up and went back to the window. In five minutes, as he expected, the gongs of the police wains sounded, and three of the vehicles skidded around the corner and stopped in front of No. 79, down the block. Funny hats tumbled out like oranges from a burst paper bag, and raced up the front steps with guns and ropes enough to handle Gargantua. The five who had been watching the house got out of their cars too and ran down the block.

Allister Park lit his pipe, and strode briskly out the front door, down the street away from the disturbance, and around the corner.

Park was announced, as Bishop Scoglund, to Dr. Edwy Borup. The head of the Psychophysical Institute was a smallish, bald, snaggly-toothed man, who smiled with an uneasy cordiality.

Park smiled back. "Wonderful work you've been doing, Dr. Borup." After handing out a few more vague compliments, he got down to business. "I understand that poor Dr. Noggle is now one of your patients?"

"Umm—uh—yes, Reverend Hallow. He is. Uh—his lusty working seems to have brock on a brainly breakdown."

Park sighed. "The good Lord will see him through, let us hope. I wonder if I could see him? I had some small kenning of him before his trouble. He once told me he'd like my spiritual guidance, when he got around to it."

"Well—umm—I'm not sure it would be wise—in his kilter—"

"Oh, come now, Dr. Borup, surely thocks of hicker things would be good for him . . ."

The sharp-nosed, gray-haired man who had been Joseph Noggle sat morosely in his room, hardly bothering to look up when Park entered.

"Well, my friend," said Park, "what have they been doing to you?"

"Nothing," said the man. His voice had a nervous edge. "That's the trouble. Every day I'm a different man in a different sanitarium. Each day they tell me that two days previously I got violent and tried to poke somebody in the nose. *I* haven't poked *nobody* in the nose. Why in God's name don't they *do* something? Sure, I know I'm crazy. I'll cooperate, if they'll *do* something."

"There, there," said Park. "The good Lord watches over all of us. By the way, what were you before your trouble started?"

"I taught singing."

Park thought several "frickful aiths." If a singing-teacher, or somebody equally incompetent for his kind of work, were in his body now . . .

He lit a pipe and talked soothingly and inconsequentially to the man, who though not in a pleasant mood, was too grateful for a bit of company to discourage him. Finally he got what he was waiting for. A husky male nurse came in to take the patient's temperature and tell Park that his time was up.

Park hung around, on one excuse or another, until the nurse had finished. Then he followed the nurse out and grasped his arm.

"What is it, Hallow?" asked the nurse.

"Are you poor Noggle's regular attendant?"

"Yes."

"Got any kinfolk, or people you like specially, in the priesthood?"

"Yes, there's my Aunt Thyra. She's a nun at the New Lindisfarne Abbey."

"Like to see her advanced?"

"Why—I guess so; yes. She's always been pretty good to me."

"All right. Here's what you do. Can you get out, or send somebody out, to telephone Noggle's condition to me every morning before noon?"

The nurse guessed he could. "All right," snapped Park. "And it won't do anybody any good if anybody knows you're doing it, understand?" He realized that his public prosecutor manner was creeping back on him. He smiled benignly. "The Lord will bless you, my son."

Park telephoned Dunedin; asked him to learn the name of somebody who dwelt on the top floor of the apartment-house next door, and to collect one ladder, thirty feet of rope, and one brick. He made him call back the name of the top-floor tenant. "But Hallow, what in the name of Patrick do you want a brick for . . ."

Park, chuckling, told him he'd learn. When he got off the folk-wain at Mercia Street, be didn't walk boldly up to his own house. He entered the apartment-house next door and said he was calling on Mrs. Figgis, his clericals constituting adequate credentials. When the elevator-man let him out on the top floor, he simply climbed to the roof and whistled for Monkey-face. He directed Dunedin in the tying of the end of the rope to the brick, the heaving thereof to the roof of the apartment-house, and the planting of the ladder to

bridge the ten-foot gap. After that it was a simple matter for Park to lower himself to his own roof, without being intercepted by the watch-dogs in front of his house.

As soon as he got in, the phone rang. A sweetness-and-light voice at the other end said: "This is Cooley, Hallow. Every time I've called your man has said you were out or else that you couldn't be bothered!"

"That's right," said Park. "I was."

"Yes? Anyway, we're all giving praises to the Lord that you were spared."

"That's fine," said Park.

"It surely is a wonderful case of how His love watches over us—"

"What's on your mind, Cooley?" said Park, sternly repressing a snarl of impatience.

"Oh—uh—what I meant was, will you give your usual sermon next Sunday?"

Park thought quickly. If he could give a sermon and get away with it, it ought to discourage the people who were trying to prove the bishop loony. "Sure I will. Where are you calling from?"

"Why—uh—the vestry." Some damned assistant, thought Park. "But, Hallow, won't you come up tonight? I'm getting some of the parishioners together in the chapel for a homish thanksgiving stint—with hymns of—"

"I'm afraid not," said Park. "Give 'em my love anyway. There goes my doorbell. Bye."

He marched into the library, muttering. Dunedin asked: "What is it, Hallow?"

"Gotta prepare a goddam sermon," said Park, taking some small pleasure at his thane's thane's expression of horror.

Fortunately the bishop was an orderly man. There were manuscripts of all his sermons for the past five years, and phonograph records (in the form of magnetized wire) of several. There was also plenty of information about the order of procedure in a Celtic Christian service. Park set about concocting a sermon out of fragments and paragraphs of those the bishop had delivered during the past year, playing the spools of wire over and over to learn the bishop's inflections. He wished he had some way of getting the bishop's gestures, too.

He was still at it next day when he dimly heard his doorbell. He thought nothing of it, trusting to Dunedin to turn the visitor away, until Monkey-face came in and announced that a pair of knicks awaited without.

Park jumped up. "Did you let 'em in?"

"No, Hallow, I thought—"

"Good boy! I'll take care of 'em."

The larger of the two cops smiled disarmingly. "Can we come in, Hallow, to use your wiretalker?"

"Nope," said Park. "Sorry."

The knick frowned. "In that case we gotta come in anyway. Mistrust of unlawful owning of pipe." He put his foot in the door-crack.

A pipe, Park knew, was a gun. He turned and stamped on the toe of the shoe, hard; then slammed the door shut as the foot was jerked back. There were some seconds of "frickful aiths" wafting through the door, then the pounding of a fist against it.

"Get a warrant!" Park yelled through the door. The noise subsided. Park called Dunedin and told him to lock the other entrances. Presently the knicks departed. Park's inference, based upon what he had been able to learn of Vinland law, that they would not force an entrance without a warrant, had proved correct. However, they would be back, and there is nothing especially difficult about "finding" an illegal weapon in a man's house, whether he had one before or not.

So Park packed a suitcase, climbed to the roof of the adjoining apartment, and went down the elevator. The elevator man looked at him in a marked manner. Once in the street, he made sure nobody was looking, and slapped on his mustache and glasses. He pulled his bonnet well down to hide his undyed hair, and walked over to Allister Park's place. There he telephoned Dunedin, and directed him to call the city editors of all the pro-bishop newspapers and tip them off that an attempt to frame the bishop impended. He told Dunedin to let the reporters in when they came; the more the better. Preferably there should be at least one in every room. Now, he thought, let those flatfeet try to sneak a gun into one of my bureau drawers so they can "find" it and raise a stink.

He spent the night at the apartment, and the next day, having gotten his sermon in shape, he paid a visit to his church. He found a functionary of some sort in an office, and told him that he, Allister Park, was considering getting married in St. Columbanus', and would the functionary (a Th. Morgan) please show him around? Th. Morgan was pleased to; Dr. Cooley usually did that job, but he was out this afternoon. Park looked sharply through his phony spectacles, memorizing the geography of the place. He wished now he'd passed up the sermon for one more week, and had instead attended next Sunday's service as Allister Park, so that he could see how the thing was done. But it was too late now. Morgan broke in on his thoughts: "There's Dr. Cooley now, Thane Park; wouldn't you like to meet him?"

"*Ulp*," said Park. "Sorry; got to see a man. Thanks a lot." Before the startled cleric could protest, Park was making for the door as fast as he could go without breaking into a run. The plump rosy young man in pince-nez, whom Park saw out of the corner of his eye, must be Cooley. Park had no intention of submitting his rather thin disguise to his assistant's inspection.

He telephoned the bishop's home. The other people in the lunch-room

were startled by the roar of laughter that came through the glass of his telephone booth as Dunedin described the two unhappy cops trying to plant a gun in his house under the noses of a dozen hostile wise-cracking reporters. Monkey-face added: "I—I took the freedom, your hallowship, of finding out that two of the newsers live right near here. If the knicks try that again, and these newsers are at home, we could wirecall them over."

"You're learning fast, old boy," said Park. "Guess I can come home now."

It was Saturday when Dunedin answered a call from the Psychophysical Institute. He cocked an eye upward, whence came a series of irregular whams as if trunks were being tossed downstairs. "Yes," he said, "I'll get him." As he wheezed upstairs, the whams gave way to a quick, muffled drumming. If anything were needed to convince him that something drastic had happened to his master's mind, the installation and regular use of a horizontal bar and a punching-bag in a disused room was it.

Park, in a pair of sweat-soaked shorts, turned his pale eyes. Good old Monkey-face. Park, who treated subordinates with great consideration, never told Dunedin what he thought he looked like.

"It's the man at the Psychophysical Institute," announced Dunedin.

The male nurse announced that, for a change, Joseph Noggle was claiming to be Joseph Noggle.

Park grabbed his bonnet and drove the steamer over. Borup asked: "But, my dear, dear Hallow, why must you—uh—see this one patient? There are plenty mair who could use your ghostly guidance."

Fool amateur, thought Park. If he doesn't want me to know why he wants to keep Noggle locked up, why doesn't he say he's violent or something? This way he's giving away his whole game. But aloud he gave a few smooth, pious excuses, and got in to see his man.

The original, authentic Noggle had a quick, nervous manner. It didn't take him more than a minute to catch on to who Park-Scoglund was.

"Look here," he said. "Look here. I've got to get out. I've got to get at my books and onmarkings. If I don't get out now, while I'm in my own body, I shan't be able to stop this damned merry-go-round for another six days!"

"You mean, my son, that you occupy your own body every six days? What happens the rest of the time?"

"The rest of the time I'm going around the wheel, indwelling ane after another of the bodies of the other men on my wheel. And the minds of these other men are following me around likewise. So every ane of the six bodies has each of our six minds in it in turn every six days."

"I see." Park smiled benignly. "And what's this wheel you talk about?"

"I call it my wheel of if. Each of the other five men on it are the men I should most likely have been *if* certain things had been otherwise. For in-

stance, the man in whose body my mind dwelt yesterday was the man I should most likely have been if King Egbert had fallen off his horse in 1781."

Park didn't stop to inquire about King Egbert or the sad results of his poor equestrianism. He asked softly: "How did your wheel get started in the first place?"

"It was when I tried to stop yours! Law of keeping of psychic momentum, you know. I got careless, and the momentum of your wheel was overchanged to mine. So I've been going around ever since. Now look here, whatever your name is, I've got to get out of here, or I'll never get stopped. I ordered them to let me out this morning, but all they'd say was that they'd see about it tomorrow. Tomorrow my body'll be occupied by some other wheel-mate, and they'll say I'm crazy again. Borup won't let me go anyway if he can help it; he likes my job. But you've got to use your inflowing as bishop—"

"Oh," said Park silkily, "I've got to use my influence, eh? Just one more question. Are we all on wheels? And how many of these possible worlds are there?"

"Yes, we're all on wheels. The usual number of rooms on a wheel is fourteen—that's the number on yours—though it sometimes varies. The number of worlds is infinite, or almost, so that the chances that anybody on my wheel would be living in the same world as anybody on yours is pretty small. But that's not weightful. The weightful thing is to get me out so—"

"Ah yes, that's the weightful thing, isn't it? But suppose you tell me why you started my wheel in the first place?"

"It was just a forseeking in the mental control of wheels."

"You're lying," said Park softly.

"Oh, I'm lying, am I? Well then, reckon out your own reason. "

"I'm sorry that you take this attitude, my son. How can I help you if you won't put your trust in me and in God?"

"Oh, come on, don't play-act. You're not the bishop, and you know it."

"Ah, but I *was* a churchman in my former being." Park fairly oozed holiness. "That's not odd, is it? Since I was the man the bishop would most likely have been if King Oswiu had chosen for the Romans, and the Arabs had lost the battle of Tours."

"You'd hold yourself bound by professional confidence?"

Park looked shocked. "What a thock! Of course I would."

"All right. I'm something of a sportsman, you know. About a month ago I got badly pinched by the ponies, and I—ah—borrowed a little heading on my pay from the Institute's funds. Of course I'd have paid it back; it was really quite an honest deed. But I had to make a few little—ah—rightings in the books, because otherwise one who didn't understand the conditions might have drawn the wrong thocks from them.

"Ivor MacSvensson somehow found out, and threatened to put me in jail

if I didn't use my mental powers to start your wheel of if going until it had made a half-turn, and then stop it. With another man's mind in the bishop's body, it ought to be easy to prove the bishop daft; in any event his inflowing would be destroyed. But as you know, it didn't work out quite that way. You seemingly aren't in anybody's custody. So you'll have to do something to get me out."

Park leaned forward and fixed Noggle with the bishop's fish-pale eyes. He said harshly: "You know, Noggle, I admire you. For a guy who robs his hospital, and then to get out of it goes and starts fourteen men's minds spinning around, ruining their lives and maybe driving some of them crazy or to self-killing, you have more gall than a barn-rat. You sit there and tell me, one of your victims, that I'll have to do something to get you out. Why, damn your lousy little soul, if you ever *do* get out I'll give you a case of lumps that'll make you think somebody dropped a mountain on you!"

Noggle paled a bit. "Then—then you weren't a churchman in your own world?"

"Hell, no! My business was putting lice like you in jail. And I still ock to be able to do that here, with what you so kindly told me just now."

Noggle swallowed as this sank in. "But—you promised—"

Park laughed unpleasantly. "Sure I did. I never let a little thing like a promise to a crook keep me awake nights."

"But you want to get back, don't you? And I'm the only one who can send you back, and you'll have to get me out of here before I can do anything—"

"There is that," said Park thoughtfully. "But I don't know. Maybe I'll like it here when I get used to it. I can always have the fun of coming around here every sixth day and giving you the horse-laugh."

"You're—a devil!"

Park laughed again. "Thanks. You thought you'd get some poor bewildered dimwit in Scoglund's body, didn't you? Well, you'll learn just how wrong you were." He stood up. "I'll let you stay here a while more as Dr. Borup's prize looney. Maybe when you've been taken down a peg we can talk business. Meanwhile, you might form a club with those other five guys on your wheel. You could leave notes around for each other to find. So long, Dr. Svengali!"

Ten minutes later Park was in Borup's office, with a bland episcopal smile an his face. He asked Borup, apropos of nothing in particular, a lot of questions about the rules involving commitment and release of inmates.

"Nay," said Edwy Borup firmly. "We could—uh—parole a patient in your care only if he were rick most of the time. Those that are wrong most of the time, like poor Dr. Noggle, have ta stay here."

It was all very definite. But Park had known lots of people who were just as definite until pressure was brought to bear on them from the right quarter.

The nearer the Sunday service came, the colder became Allister Park's feet.

Which, for such an aggressive, self-confident man, was peculiar. But when he thought of all the little details, the kneeling and getting up again, the facing this way and that . . . He telephoned Cooley at the cathedral. He had, he said, a cold, and would Cooley handle everything but the sermon? "Surely, Hallow, surely. The Lord will see to it that you're fully restored soon, I hope. I'll say a special prayer for you . . ."

It was also time, Park thought, to take Monkey-face in to his confidence. He told him all, whereat Dunedin's eyes grew very large. "Now, old boy," said Park briskly, "if you ever want to get your master back into his own body, you'll have to help me out. For instance, here's that damned sermon. I'm going to read it, and you'll correct my pronunciation and gestures."

Sunday afternoon, Park returned wearily to the bishop's house. The sermon had gone off easily enough; but then he'd had to greet hundreds of people he didn't know, as if they were old friends. And he'd had to parry scores of questions about his absence. He had, he thought, earned a drink.

"A highball?" asked Dunedin. "What's that?"

Park explained. Dunedin looked positively shocked.

"But Thane P—I mean Hallow, isn't it bad for your insides to drink such cold stuff?"

"Never mind my insides! I'll—hullo, who's that?"

Dunedin answered the doorbell, and reported that a Th. Figgis wanted to see the bishop. Park said to show him in.

There was something familiar about that name. The man himself was tall, angular, and grim-looking. As soon as Dunedin had gone, he leaned forward and hissed dramatically: "I've got you now, Bishop Scoglund! What are you going to do about it?"

"What am I going to do about *what?*"

"My wife!"

"What about your wife?"

"You know well enough. You went up to my rooms last Tuesday, while I was away, and came down again Wednesday."

"Don't be an ass," said Park. "I've never been in your rooms in my life, and I've never met your wife."

"Oh, yes? Don't try to fool me, you wolf in priest's clothing! I've got witnesses. By God, I'll fix you, you seducer!"

"Oh, that!" Park grinned, and explained his ladder-and-rope procedure.

"Think I believe that?" sneered Figgis. "If you weren't a priest I'd challenge you and cut your liver out and eat it. As it is, I can make things so hot for you—"

"Now, now," interrupted Park, "Be reasonable. I'm sure we can come to an understanding—"

"Trying to bribe me, huh?"

"I wouldn't put it just that way."

"So you think you can buy my honor, do you? Well, what's your offer?"

Park sighed. "I thought so. Just another goddam blackmailer. Get out, louse!"

"But aren't you going to—"

Park jumped up, spun Figgis around, and marched him toward the door. "Out, I said! If you think you can get away with spreading your little scandal around, go to it. You'll learn that you aren't the only one who knows things about other people." Figgis tried to wriggle loose. Park kicked him into submission, and sent him staggering down the front steps with a final shove.

Dunedin looked awedly at this formidable creature into which his master had been metamorphosed. "Do you really know something to keep him quiet, Hallow?"

"Nope. But my experience is that most men of his age have something they'd rather not have known. Anyway, you've got to take a strong line with these blackmailers, or they'll raise no end of hell. Of course, my son, we hope, the good Lord will show our erring brother the folly of his sinful ways, don't we?" Park winked.

Being a bishop entailed much more than putting on a one-hour performance at the cathedral every Sunday, as Park soon learned. But he transacted as much of his episcopal business as he could at home, and put the rest onto Cooley. He didn't yet feel that his impersonation was good enough to submit to close-range examination by his swarm of subordinates.

While he was planning his next step, an accident unexpectedly opened the way for him. He had just settled himself in the Isleif Street apartment the evening of Tuesday, April 26th, when a young man rang his doorbell. It took about six seconds to diagnose the young man as a fledgling lawyer getting a start on a political career as a precinct worker.

"No," said Park, "I won't sign your petition to nominate Thane Hammer, because I don't know him. I've just moved here from Dakotia. But I'd like to come around to the clubhouse and meet the boys."

The young man glowed. "Why don't you? There's a meeting of the precinct workers tomorrow night, and voters are always welcome . . ."

The clubhouse walls were covered with phony Viking shields and weapons. "Who's he?" Park asked his young lawyer through the haze of smoke. "He" was a florid man to whom several were paying obsequious attention.

"That's Trigvy Darling, Brahtz's parasite." Park caught a note of dislike, and added it to the new card in his mental index file. Brahtz was a Diamond thing-man from a western province, the leader of the squirearchy. In this some-

what naive culture, a gentleman had to demonstrate his financial standing by supporting a flock of idle friends, or deputy gentlemen. The name of the parasite was not merely accurate, but was accepted by these hangers-on without any feeling of derogation.

Through the haze wove an unpleasantly familiar angular figure. Park's grip on the edge of the table automatically tightened. "Haw, Morrow," said Figgis, and looked at Park. "Haven't I met you somewhere?"

"Maybe," said Park. "Ever live in Dakotia?"

Morrow, the young lawyer, introduced Park as Park.

Park fervently hoped his disguise was thick enough. Figgis acknowledged the introduction, but continued to shoot uneasy little glances at Park. "I could swear—" he said. Just then the meeting was called. Although it would have driven a lot of people to suicide from boredom, Park enjoyed the interplay of personalities, the quick fencing with parliamentary rules by various factions. These rules differed from those he was used to, being derived from those of the ancient Icelandic Thing instead of the English Parliament. But the idea was the same. The local members wanted to throw a party for the voters of the hide (district). A well-knit minority led by the parasite Darling wanted to save the money for contribution to the national war-chest.

Park waited until the question was just about to be put to a vote, then snapped his fingers for the chairman's attention. The chairman, an elderly dodderer, recognized him.

"My friends," said Park, lurching to his feet, "of course I don't know that I really ock to say anything, being just a new incomer from the wilds of Dakotia. But I've always voted Diamond, and so did my father, and his father before him, and so on back as far as there *was* any Diamond Party. So I think I can claim as solid a party membership as some folks who live in New Belfast three months out of the year, and spend the rest of their time upholding the monetary repute of certain honorable country thanes." Park, with satisfaction, saw Darling jerk his tomato-colored face around, and heard a few snickers.

"Though," he continued, "taking the healthy skin you get from country life, I don't know but what I envy such people." (More snickers.) "Now it seems to me that . . ."

Twenty minutes later the party had been voted: Park was the chairman (since he alone seemed really anxious to assume responsibility); and Trigvy Darling, at whose expense Park had acquired a frothy popularity by his jibes, had turned from vermillion to magenta.

After the meeting, Park found himself in a group of people including the chairman and Figgis. Figgis was saying something about that scoundrel Scoglund, when his eye caught Park's. He grinned his slightly sepulchral grin.

"I know now why I thock I'd meet you! You remind me of the bishop!"

"Know him?"

"I met him once. Say, Dutt," (this was to the aged chairman) "what date's set for your withdrawal?"

"Next meeting," quavered the ancient one. "Ah, here is our crown prince, heh, heh!" Darling, his face back to normal tomato-color, advanced. "Do you ken Thane Park?"

"I ken him well enough," growled Darling with the look of one who has found a cockroach in his ice cream. "It seems to me, Thane Dutt, that part of a chairman's duty is to stop use of personalities on the part of speakers."

"You can always plead point of personal privilege, heh, heh."

Darling did something in his throat that was not quite articulate speech. Figgis murmured: "He knows the boys would laugh him down if he tried it."

"Yeah?" said Darling. "We'll see about that when I'm chairman." He stalked off.

Park wasted no time in exploiting his new job. Knowing that Ivor MacSvensson was due back in New Belfast the next day, he went around—as Allister Park—to the law office used by the boss as a front for his activities. The boss was already in, but the outer office was jammed with favor-seekers. Park, instead of preparing to spend the morning awaiting his turn, bribed the office boy to tell him when and where MacSvensson ate his lunch. Then he went to the nearby public library—movies not having been invented in this world—and took his ease until one o'clock.

Unfortunately, Ivor MacSvensson failed to show up at the restaurant indicated, though Park stretched one tuna-fish lunch out for half an hour. Park cursed the lying office-boy. Plain bribery he was hardened to, but he really became indignant when the bribee failed to deliver. So he set about it the hard way. A nearby knick gave him the locations of the five highest-priced restaurants in the neighborhood, and in the third he found his man. He recognized him from the pictures he had studied before starting his search—a big, good-looking fellow with cold blue eyes and prematurely white hair.

Park marched right up. "Haw, Thane MacSvensson. Bethink you me?"

MacSvensson looked puzzled for a fraction of a second, but he said smoothly: "Sure, of course I bethink me of you. Your name is—uh —"

"Allister Park, chairman of the amusement committee of the Tenth Hide," Park rattled off. "I only met you recently, just before you left."

"Sure, of course. I'd know you anywhere—let's see, Judge Vidolf of Bridget's Beach wirecalled me this morning; wanted to know if I kenned you. Told him I'd call him back." He gripped Park's hand. "Come on, sit down. Sure, of course, any good party worker is a friend of mine. What's the Tenth Hide doing?"

Park told of the party. MacSvensson whistled. "Saturday the thirtieth? That's the day after tomorrow."

"I can manage it," said Park. "Maybe you could tell me where I could pick up some sober bartenders."

"Sure, of course." Under Park's deferential prodding, the boss gave him all the information he needed. MacSvensson finished with the quick, vigorous handshake cultivated by people who have to shake thousands of hands and who don't want to develop a case of greeter's cramp. He urged Park to come around and see him again.

"Especially after that fellow Darling gets the chairmanship of your committee."

Park went, grinning a little to himself. He knew just what sort of impression he had made, and could guess how the boss was reacting to it. He'd be glad to get a vigorous, aggressive worker in the organization; at the same time he'd want to keep a close watch on him to see that *his* power wasn't undermined.

Park congratulated himself on having arrived in a world where the political set-up had a recognizable likeness to that of his own. In an absolute monarchy, for instance, he'd have a hell of a time learning the particular brand of intrigue necessary to become a king's favorite. As it was . . .

The Bridget's Beach knicks stood glowering at a safe distance from the throng of picknickers. Although they were anti-MacSvensson, the judges were pro, so what could they do about it if the party violated the ordnances regarding use of the beach? Since Park's fellow committeemen were by now too sodden with beer to do anything at all, Park was dashing around, clad in a pair of tennis-shoes and the absurd particolored belt that constituted the Vinland bathing-suit, running everything himself. Everybody seemed to be having a good time—party workers, the more influential of the voters and their families, everybody but a morose knot of Darling & followers at one end.

Near this knot a group of anti-Darlings was setting up a song:

"Trig Darling, he has a foul temper;
"Trig Darling's as red as can be;
"Oh, nobody here loves Trig Darling,
"Throw Trigvy out into the sea!
"Throw—Trig,
"Throw—Trig,
"Throw—Trigvy out into the sea!"

Park hurried up to shush them. Things were going fine, and he didn't want a

fight—yet, at any rate. But his efforts were lost in the next stanza:

"Trig Darling, he has a pot-bellee;
"Trig Darling's as mean as can be . . ."

At that moment, apparently, a giant hit Allister Park over the head with a *Sequoia sempervirens.* He reeled a few steps, shook the tears out of his eyes, and faced Trigvy Darling, advancing with large fists cocked.

"Hey," said Park, "this isn't—" He brought up his own fists. But Darling, instead of trying to hit him again, faced him for three seconds and then spat at him.

Park glanced at the drop of saliva trickling down his chest. So did everyone else. One of Darling's friends asked: "Do you make that a challenge, Trig?"

"Yes!" boomed the parasite.

Park didn't really catch on to what was coming until he was surrounded by his own party. He and Darling were pushed together until their bare chests were a foot apart.

Somebody called the knicks over; these stationed themselves around the couple. Somebody else produced a long leather belt, which he fastened around the middles of both men at once, so they could not move farther apart.

Darling, his red face expressionless, grabbed Park's right wrist with his left band, and held out his own right forearm, evidently expecting Park to do the same.

It was not until a big sheath-knife was pressed into each man's right hand that Park knew he was in a duel.

Somehow he had missed this phase of Vinland custom in his reading.

Park wondered frantically whether his mustache would come off in the struggle. One knick stepped up and, said:

"You know the rules: no kicking, biting, butting, or scratching. Penalty for a foul is one free stab. Ready?"

"Yes," said Darling.

"Yes," said Park, with more confidence than he felt.

"Go," said the policeman.

Park felt an instant surge of his opponent's muscles. Darling had plenty of these under the fat. If he'd only had longer to train the bishop's body . . . Darling wrenched his wrist loose from Park's grip, threw a leg around one of Park's to trip him, and brought his fist down in a lightning overhand stab.

It was too successful. Park's leg went out from under him and he landed with a thump on his back, dragging Darling down on top of him. Darling drove his knife up to the hilt in the sand. When he jerked it up for another stab, Park miraculously caught his wrist again. A heave, and Darling toppled onto the sand beside him. For seconds they strained and panted, a tangle of limbs.

Park, his heart laboring and sand in his eyes, wrenched his own knife-arm free. But when he stabbed at Darling, the parasite parried with a curious twisting motion of his left arm, and gathered Park's arm into a bone-crushing grip. Park in agony heaved himself to his knees, pulling Darling up too. They faced each other on their knees, the belt still around them. Darling wrenched his knife-arm loose again, whipped it around as for a backhand stab, then back for an overhand. Park, trying to follow the darting blade, felt as if something had exploded in his own left arm. Darling's point was driven into it and into the bone. Before it had a chance to bleed, Darling tried to pull it out. It didn't yield the first pull. Park leaned forward suddenly. Darling unwound his left arm from Park's right to catch himself as he swayed backwards. Park stabbed at him. Darling blocked the stab with his forearm, making Park feel as if his wrist was broken. He played his last improvised trick: tossed up the knife, caught it the other way to, and brought it around in a quick up-and-out thrust. To his surprise, Darling failed to block it at all—the blade slid up under the parasite's ribs to the hilt. Park, warm blood running over his hand, twisted and sliced his way across Darling's abdomen . . .

Trigvy Darling lay on his back, mouth open and sand in his sightless eyeballs. The spectators looked in awe at the ten-inch wound. Park, feeling a bit shaken, stood while they bandaged his arm. The knicks gravely took down the vital information about the dead man, filling the last line in the blank with: "Killed in fair fight with Allister Park, 127 Isleif St., N.B."

Then people were shaking his hand, slapping his bare back, and babbling congratulations at him. "Had it coming to him . . ." ". . . never liked him anyway, only we had to take him on account of Brahtz . . ." "You'll make a better chairman . . ."

Park stole a hand to his upper lip. His mustache was a little loose on one side, but a quick press fixed that. He gradually became aware that the duel, so far from spoiling the party, had made a howling success of it.

Leading a double life is a strenuous business at best. It is particularly difficult when both one's identities are fairly prominent people. Nevertheless, Allister Park managed it, with single-minded determination to let nothing stop his getting the person of Joseph Noggle in such a position that he could make him give his, Park's, wheel of if another half-spin. It might not be too late, even if the Antonini case was washed up, to rehabilitate himself.

His next step was to cultivate Ivor MacSvensson, burg committee chairman for the Diamond Party of the Burg of New Belfast. This was easy enough, as the chairman of the hide committee was ex-officio a member of the burg committee.

They were dining in one of the small but expensive restaurants for which MacSvensson had a weakness. The burg chairman said: "We'll have to get

Anlaaf off, that's all there is to it. Those dim knicks should have known better than to pull him in it in the first place."

Park looked at the ceiling. "Even if it was Penda's daughter?"

"Even if it was Penda's daughter."

"After all, spoiling the morals of a ten-year old—"

"I know, I know," said MacSvensson impatiently. "I know he's a dirty bustard. But what can I do? He's got the twenty-sixth hide in his fist, so I've got to play cards with him. Especially with the thingly choosing coming up in three months. It'll be close, even with Bishop Scoglund lying low the way he has been. I had a little plan for shushing the dear bishop; it didn't work, but it seems to have scared him into keeping quiet about the ricks of the Skrellings. And the Thing meeting next month. . .If that damned equal-ricks changelet goes through, it'll split the party wide open."

"If it doesn't?" asked Park.

"That'll be all right."

"How about the Dakotians and the rest?"

MacSvensson shrugged. "No trouble for fifty years. They talk a lot, but I never saw a Skrelling that would stand up and fick yet. And what if they did try a war? New Belfast is a long way from the border; and the choosing would be called off. Maybe by the time it was over people would get some sense."

Park had his own ideas. His researches had told him something about the unprepared state of the country. New Belfast had hundreds of miles between it and the independent Skrellings; in case of a sea attack, they could count on the friendly Northumbrian fleet, one of the world's largest, to come over and help out. Hence the New Belfast machine had consistently plugged for more money for harbor improvements and merchant-marine subsidies and less for military purposes . . . However, if the Northumbrian fleet were immobilized by the threat of the navy of the Amirate of Cordova, and the Skrellings overran the hinterland of Vinland . . .

MacSvensson was speaking: ". . . you know, that youngest daughter of mine, she wants to marry a *schoolteacher?* Craziest idea . . . And that boy of mine has the house full of his musical friends; at least that's what he calls 'em. They'll play their flugelhorns and yell and stamp all night."

"Why not come up to my place?" asked Park with the studied nonchalance of an experienced dry-fly fisherman making a cast.

"Sure, of course. Glad to. I've got three appointments, thinging, but hell with 'em."

There was no doubt about it; Ivor MacSvensson was good company even if he did have a deplorable scale of moral values. Park, having made the necessary soundings, finally suggested getting some company. The chairman's blue eyes lit up a bit; there was some lechery in the old war-horse yet. Park telephoned

his little waitress friend. Yes, she had a friend who was just *dying* to meet some big political pipes . . .

Many residents of New Belfast were wont to say of Ivor MacSvensson: "He may be a serpent (crook), but at least he leads a spotless home life." MacSvensson was at pains to encourage this legend, however insubstantial its basis. These people would have been pained to see the boss an hour later, smeared with lipstick, bouncing Park's friend's friend on his knee. The friend's friend was undressed to a degree that would have shocked Vinlanders anywhere but on a beach.

"Stuffy, isn't it?" said Park, and got up to open a window. The unsuspecting MacSvensson was having too good a time to notice Park thrust his arm out the window and wag it briefly.

Five minutes later the doorbell rang. By the time MacSvensson had snapped out of his happy daze, Park had admitted a small, wrinkled man who pointed at the friend's friend and cried: "Fleda!"

"Oswald!" shrieked the girl.

"Sir!" shouted Dunedin at the boss, "what have you been doing with my wife? What have you been doing with my wife?"

"Oh," sobbed Fleda, "I didn't mean to be unfaithful! Truly I didn't! If I'd only thought of you before it was too late . . ."

"Huh?" mumbled MacSvensson. "Too late? Unfaithful? Your wife?"

"Yes, you snake, you scoundrel, you bustard, my wife! You'll suffer for this, Boss MacSvensson! Just wait till I—"

"Here, here, my man!" said Park, taking Dunedin by the arm and pulling him into the vestibule. For ten minutes the boss listened in sweaty apprehension to Park's and Dunedin's voices, rising and falling, the former soothing, the latter strained with rage. Finally the door slammed.

Park came back, and said: "I got him to promise not to put in any slurs or tell any newspapers for a while, until we talk things over again. I know who he is, and I *think* I can squelch him through the company he works for. I'm not sure that'll work, though. He's mad as a wet hen; won't believe that this was just an innocent get-together."

The imperturbable boss looked badly shaken. "You've got to stop him. Al! The story would raise merry hell. If you can do it, you can have just about anything I can give you."

"How about the secretaryship of the burg committee?" asked Park promptly.

"Surely, of course. I can find something else for Ethelbald to do. Only keep that man shut up!"

"All right, old boy. Right now you'd better get home as soon as you can."

When MacSvensson had been gone a few minutes, Eric Dunedin's ugly face appeared in the doorway. "All clear, Hal—I mean Thane Park?"

"Come on in, old boy. That was a neat piece of work. You did well too,

Fleda. Both you girls did. And now—" Park started to drive a corkscrew into another cork, "we can have a *real* party!"

"Damn it, Dunedin," said Park, "when I say put your breakfast down on the table and eat it, I mean it!"

"But Hallow, it simply isn't done for a thane's thane to *eat* with his master—"

"To hell with what's done and what isn't. I've got more for you to do than stand around and treat me as if I were God Almighty. We've got work, brother. Now get busy on that mail."

Dunedin sighed and gave up. When Park chose to, he could by now put on what Dunedin admitted was a nearly perfect imitation of Bishop Scoglund. But unless there were somebody present to be impressed thereby, he chose instead to be his profane and domineering self.

Dunedin frowned over one letter, and said: "Thane Callahan wants to know why you haven't been doing anything to push the glick-ricks changelet."

Park mentally translated the last to "equal-rights amendment."

"Why should I? It isn't my baby. Oh, well, tell him I've been too busy, but I'll get around to it soon. That's always the stock excuse."

Dunedin whistled suddenly. "The kin of the late Trigvy Darling have filed a wergild claim of a hundred and fifty thousand crowns against you."

"What? What? Let's see that! . . . What's that all about? Have they got the right to sue me, when I killed him in self-defense?"

"Oh, but of course, Hallow. There's nay criminal penalty for killing a man in fair fight. But his heirs can claim two years' earnings from you. Didn't you know that when you took up his challenge?"

"Good lord, no! What can I do about it?"

"Oh, deary me, glory be to Patrick. You can try to prove the claim too big, as this one may be. I don't know, though; Darling got a big stipend from Brahtz as a parasite."

"I can always withdraw Allister Park from circulation and be just the bishop. Then let 'em try to collect!"

It would be wearisome to follow Allister Park's political activates in detail for the three weeks after his use of the badger-game on MacSvensson. But lest his extraordinary rise to power seem improbable, consider that it was not until the 1920's in Park's original world that a certain Josef Vissarianovitch Dzugashvili, better known as Joseph Stalin, discovered what could really be done with the executive secretaryship of a political committee. So it is not too surprising that, whereas Park knew what could be done with his office, the politicians of Vinland did not. They learned. Among other things, the secre-

tary makes up the agenda of meetings. He put motions in "proper" form, since a motion is seldom intelligible in the form in which it is presented from the floor. He prompts the chairman—the nominal head of the organization—on parliamentary procedure. He is the interim executive officer; wherefore all appointments go through his hands, and he has custody of all records. He is ex-officio member of all committees. Since a committee seldom has any clear idea of what it wants to do or how it wants to do it, an aggressive secretary can usually run as many committees as he has time for. Whereas the chairman can't speak at meetings, the secretary can not only speak but speak last. He gets the gavel when an appeal is made from the chair . . .

At least, that is how it is done in *this* world. In Vinland, the rules were not quite the same, but the similarity was close enough for Park's purpose—which was still to get back to good old New York and that judgeship, if there was still any chance of getting it.

It was after the burg committee meeting on the first of June that Park faced Ivor MacSvensson in the latter's office. Park intended to start needling the boss about the body of Joseph Noggle. But MacSvensson got there first, demanding: "What's all this about your making up to the committeemen?"

"What's that?" asked Park blandly. "I've been seeing them on routine duties only."

"Yeah? Not according to what I've been told. And I've found out that that girl you had up for me wasn't wedded at all. Trying to put one down on the boss, eh? Well, you can go back to hide-walking. You'll call a special committee-meeting for Friday night. Get those seeings out today without fail. That's all."

"Suits me," grinned Park. The chairman can demand special meetings, but the secretary's the man who sends out the notices.

When Friday evening arrived, two-thirds of the seats in the committee-room in Karlsefni Hall remained empty. MacSvensson, blue eyes glacial, fretted. Park, sending out thunderheads of smoke from the bishop's largest pipe, lolled in a chair, glancing surreptitiously at his watch. If MacSvensson were down at the far end of the hall when the hand touched sixty, Park would simply arise and say:

"In the absence of the chairman, and of any other officers authorized to act as such, I, Allister Park, acting as chairman, hereby call this meeting to order . . ."

But MacSvensson, looking at him, divined his attention. He snatched out his own watch, and dashed to the chair. He made it by one and a half seconds.

Park was not disturbed. He took his place, hearing the boss's growl: "Did you send out all those seeings when I told you to, Park? There's just barely a quorum here."

"Absolutely. I can't help it if they go astray in the mail." Park neglected to add that, with the proper cooperation from a postal clerk, it is sometimes possible to make sure that certain of the notices, though duly postmarked as of the time they are received, are accidentally misplaced in the postoffice and completely overlooked until the day after the meeting.

"The meeting will kindly come to order," snapped MacSvensson. He did not like the look of the quorum at all; not one of his tried and true friends was in sight, except Sleepy Ethelbald.

He continued; "This is a special meeting called to hold in mind the good and welfare of the committee. As such there will be no reading of the minutes. The meeting will now consider items for the agenda."

MacSvensson caught the eye of Sleepy Ethelbald, who had been primed for just this occasion. Before Ethelbald could rouse himself, another committeeman popped up with: "I move that we take up the fitness of Chairman MacSvensson to last in his present office."

"Twothed."

"I move the agenda be closed."

"Twothed."

MacSvensson sat up for a few seconds with his mouth open. He had had revolts before—plenty of them—but never one with the devastating speed and coordination of this. He finally mumbled: "All in favor—"

"Aye!" roared most of the quorum.

MacSvensson ran fingers through his hair, then. Squared his shoulders. He wasn't licked yet, by any means. There were more tricks . . . "The meeting will now consider the first item on the agenda."

"I move the impeachment of Chairman MacSvensson!"

"Twothed!"

For the second time the chairman sat with his mouth open. Park said gently: "You take up the motion and give me the gavel."

"But—" wailed MacSvensson.

"No buts. A motion to impeach the chairman self-movingly shifts the gavel to the secretary. Come on, old boy."

An hour later Ivor MacSvensson stalked out, beaten. Park could have had the chairmanship himself, but he astutely preferred to keep the secretaryship and put the ancient of days, Magnus Dutt, in that exposed position.

Mayor Offa Greenfield knew his own mind, such as it was. He banged his fist on his desk, making all his chins quiver. "Nay!" he shouted. "I don't know what you're up to, Allister Park, but by the right ear of Hallow Gall, it's something! The freedom of a free people—"

"Now, now, we're not talking about the freedom of a free people. I'm sure

we agree on that matter. It's just a question of the person of Joseph Noggle—"

"I won't be dictated to! I won't take orders from anybody!"

"Except Ivor MacSvensson?"

"Except Iv—nay! I said anybody! Go practice your snaky trick on somebody else, Allister Park; you'll get nothing from me! I won't interfere with Borup's running of his Institute. Unless, of course," (Greenfield lowered his voice to normal) "you can get MacSvensson to back you up."

Greenfield, it seemed, had the one virtue of loyalty. He intended to stick by the fallen boss to the bitter end, even though nearly all the rest of MacSvensson's staunch supporters had deserted him when the effectiveness of Park's coup had become patent.

But Greenfield was not elected, as were the members of the burg thing. He was appointed by a committee of the Althing, the national legislative body. So Park, for all his local power, could not displace Greenfield at the coming elections by putting up a rival candidate. He could only do it by acquiring sufficient power in the Althing. He set himself to study how to do this.

New Belfast elected six members to the Althing. As the city was firmly Diamond, nomination implied election. Therefore the six thingmen, however much they bragged about their independence in public, were careful to obey the whims of the boss of New Belfast.

The repeated efforts of Yon Brahtz to impose his control on the New Belfast Diamonds, by planting stooges like the late Trigvy Darling in their hide committees, had aroused some resentment. Park decided that he could trust his most active supporters, and the six thingmen, to back him in a gigantic double-cross: to desert the Diamond Party altogether and join the Rubies. The goats would be, not merely Brahtz and his squirearchy, but the local Ruby politicians of New Belfast. However, as these had never accomplished anything but draw some patronage from the Althing in the periods when the Rubies were in power there, Park thought he would not find much resistance to their sacrifice on the part of the Ruby leaders. And so it proved.

Twenty men, though, seldom keep a secret for long. The morning of June 9th, Park opened his paper to find the report of a defiant speech by Yon Brahtz, in which he announced bluntly that "the thanes of the Cherogian March of Vinland will defend the ricks they inherited from their heroic forebears, by any means needful, and moreover the means for such defense are ready and waiting!" Park translated this to mean that if the Scoglund amendment were passed by a coalition of Rubies and insurgent New Belfast Diamonds, the squirearchy would secede.

But that would mean civil war, which in turn would mean postponement of the elections. What was even more serious, the Diamond thingmen from the seceding provinces would automatically lose their seats, giving the Rubies

a clear majority. Since the Rubies would no longer need the support of Park's insurgents, they would be disinclined to make a deal with him to appoint a mayor of his choice.

Park privately thought that, while in theory he supposed he believed in the Scoglund amendment, in practice both his and the Ruby leaders' interests would be better served by dropping it for the present, despite the growls of the Dakotians and Cherogians. However, the Ruby leaders were firm; that huge block of Skrelling votes they would get by emancipating the aborigines was worth almost any risk.

As for such questions as the rights of the Skrellings as human beings, or the unfortunate Vinlanders who would be killed or haggled up in a civil war, they were not considered at all.

Park, holed up in the Isleif Street apartment with a couple of bodyguards, answered a call from Dunedin. "Haw, Hallow? Thane Callahan is here to see you."

"Send him over here. Warn him ahead of time who I—" Park remembered the guards, and amended: "warn him about everything. You know."

Lord, he thought, all this just to get hold of Noggle, still shut up in the Psychophysical Institute! Maybe it would have been simpler to organize a private army like Brahtz's and storm that fortress-like structure. A long-distance call for the mobilization of his Sons of the Vikings, as he called his storm-troopers. Kedrick, the Bretwald of Vinland, had refused to mobilize the army because, he explained, such an action would be "provocative". . . Maybe he secretly favored the squirearchy, whose man he was; maybe he was just a pacific civilian who found the whole subject of soldiers, guns, and such horrid things too repulsive to discuss; maybe he really believed what he said. . .

Callahan arrived with a flourish. Since MacSvensson was no longer boss of New Belfast, the Sachem went openly about the city without fear of arrest and beating-up by the police.

He told Park: "It would be worth my life if some of my fellow-Skrellings knew I'd told you. But the Dakotians have an army secretly assembled on the bounds. If the Vinlanders start fickting among themselves, the Dakotians'll jump in to grab the northwestern provinces."

Park whistled. "How about the Cherogians?"

"They're holding back, waiting to see how things are turning out If the war seems to be fruitbearing, they'll try a little rickting of the bounds themselves."

"And what will your Skrellings do then?"

"That depends. If the Scoglund changelet is lost, they'll join the foe to a man. If it goes through, I think I can hold most of them in line."

"Why do you tell me this, Callahan?"

The Sachem grinned his large disarming grin. "Two reasons. First, the

bishop and I have been friends for years, and I'll stick to his body no matter where his soul may be. Twoth, I'm not fooled, as some of my Skrellings are, by talk of what fine things the Dakotians'll do for us if we help them overthrow the palefaces. The Dakotian realm is even less á folkish one than the Bretwaldate's. I know a thing or two about how they treat their ain folk. So if you'll stick to me, I'll stick to you."

Park would have liked to appear at the opening of the Althing as Bishop Scoglund. But, as too many people there knew him as Allister Park, he attended in his mustache, hair-dye, and spectacles.

The atmosphere was electric. Even Park, with all his acumen, had been unable to keep up with events. The risks were huge, whichever way he threw his insurgents' votes.

He kept them shut up in a committee-room with him until the last possible minute. He did not yet know himself whether he would order them to vote for or against the amendment.

The clock on the wall ticked around.

A boy came in with a message for Park. It said, in effect, that the Sons of the Vikings had received a report that the amendment had already been passed; had mobilized and seized the town of Olafsburg.

Who had sent that mistaken message and why, there was no way of finding out. But it was too late for anybody to back down. Park looked up and said, very seriously: "We're voting for the Scoglund Amendment." That was all; with his well-trained cogs no more was necessary.

The bell rang; they filed out. Park took his seat in the visitors' gallery. He said nothing but thought furiously as the session of the Althing was opened with the usual formalities. The chairman and the speaker and the chaplain took an interminable time about their business, as if afraid to come to grips with the fearful reality awaiting their attention.

When the first motions came up, a dead silence fell as Park's men got up and walked over to the Rubies' side of the house. Then the Rubies let out a yell of triumph. There was no more need of stalling or delicate angling for marginal votes. Motion after motion went through with a roar. Out went the Diamond chairman and speaker, and in went Rubies in their place.

In an hour the debate had been shut off, despite howls from Diamonds and their sympathizers about "gag law" and "high-handed procedure".

The amendment came up for its first vote. It fell short of the two-thirds required by eleven votes.

Park scribbled a note and had it delivered to the speaker. The speaker handed it to the chairman. Park watched the little white note drift around the Ruby side of the house. Then the Ruby leader got up and solemnly moved the suspension of thingmen Adamson, Arduser, Beurwulf, Dahl, Fessenden;

Gilpatrick, Holmquist . . . all the thingmen from the seceding area.

Most of those named didn't wait; they rose and filed out, presumably to catch airwains for their home provinces.

The amendment passed on the second vote.

Park looked up the Ruby leader after the Althing adjourned. He said: "I hear Kedrick still won't order motion. Talks about 'Letting the erring brethren go in peace.' What's your party line on the matter?"

The Ruby leader, a thin cool man, blew smoke through his nose. "We're going to fight. If Kedrick won't go along, there are ways. The same applies to *you,* Thane Park."

Park suddenly realized that events had put him in a suspect position. If he didn't want himself and his cogs to be damned as copperheads, or the Vinland equivalent, he'd have to outshout the Rubies for unity, down with the rebels, etcetera.

Well, he might as well do a good job of it.

That afternoon the guards at the Psychophysical Institute were astonished to have their sanctuary invaded by a squad of uniformed knicks with the notorious Allister Park at their head flourishing a search-warrant. The charge was violation of the fire-ordnances—in a building made almost entirely of tile, glass, and reinforced concrete.

"But, but, but!" stuttered Dr. Edwy Borup. Park merely whisked out another warrant, this time for the arrest of Joseph Noggle.

"But, but, you can't stop one of my patients! It's—uh—illegal! I'll call Mayor Greenfield!"

"Go ahead," grinned Park. "But don't be surprised if you get a busy signal." He had taken the precaution of seeing that all the lines to the mayor's office would be occupied at this time.

"Hello, Noggle," said Park.

"Haw. Who are you? I think I've met you—let me see—"

Park produced an air pistol. "I'm Allister Park. You'll figure out where you met me soon enough, but you won't talk about it. I'm glad to see my figuring came out right. Can you start a man's wheel today? Now?"

"I suppose I could. Oh, *I* know who you are now—"

"Nay comments, I said. You're coming along, brother, and doing just as you're told."

The next step was when Park walked arm in arm with Noggle into the imposing executive building. Park's standing as a powerful boss saw him through the guards and flunkeys that guarded the Bretwald's office on the top floor.

The Bretwald looked up from his desk. "Oh, haw, Thane Park. If you're going to nag me about that mobilization order, you're wasting your time. Who's—eece! Where am I? What's happened to me? Help! Help!"

In bounded the guards, guns ready. Park fared them sadly. "Our respected Bretwald seems to have had a mental seizure," he said.

The guards covered the two visitors and asked Kedrick what was the matter. All they could get out of Kedrick was: "Help! Get away from me! Let me out! I don't know who you're talking about. My name's not Kedrick, it's O'Shaughnessy! "

They took him away. The guards kept Park and Noggle until a message from the acting Bretwald said to let them go.

"By the brazen gates of Hell!" cried Park. "Is *that* all?"

"Yep," said the new Secretary of War. "Douglas was a Brahtz man; hence he saw to it that the army was made as harmless as possible before he skipped out."

Park laughed grimly. "The Secretary of War sabotages—"

"He does what?"

"Never mind. He raises hell with, if you want a more familiar expression. Raises hell with the army for the benefit of his party, with the Dakotians about to come whooping in. I suppose it oughtn't to surprise me, though. How many can we raise?"

"About twenty thousand in the burgish area, but we can arm only half of them rickly. Most of our quick-fire pipes and warwains have been hurt so it'll take a month to fix them."

"How about a force of Skrellings?"

The Secretary shrugged. "We can raise 'em, but we can't arm them."

"Go ahead and raise 'em anyway."

"All right, if you say so. But hadn't you better have a rank? It would look better."

"All right. You make me your assistant."

"Don't you want a commission?"

"Not on your life! Your generals would go on strike, and even if they didn't I'd be subject to military law."

The army was not an impressive one, even when its various contingents had all collected at what would have been Pittsburgh if its name hadn't been the lovely one of Guggenvik. The regulars were few and unimpressive; the militia were more numerous but even less prepossessing; the Skrelling levy was the most unmilitary of all. They stood around with silly grins on their flat brown faces, and chattered and scratched. Park thought disgustedly, so these are the descendants of the noble red man and the heroic Viking! Fifty years of peace had been a blessing to Vinland, but not an altogether unmitigated one.

The transport consisted of a vast fleet of private folkwains and goodwains (busses and trucks to you). It had been possible to put only six warwains in

the field. These were a kind of steam-driven armored car carrying a compressor and a couple of pneumatic machine-guns. There was one portable liquid-air plant for charging shells and air-bombs.

The backwardness of Vinland chemistry compared to its physics caused a curious situation. The only practical military explosives were a rather low-grade black powder, and a carbon-liquid-oxygen-mixture. Since the former was less satisfactory as a propellant, considering smoke, flash, and barrel-fouling, than compressed air, and was less effective as a detonant than the liquid air explosive; its military use was largely confined to land mines. Liquid oxygen, however, while as powerful as trinitrotoluol, had to be manufactured on the spot, as there was no way of preventing its evaporation. Hence it was a very awkward thing to use in mobile warfare.

Park walked into the intelligence tent, and asked the Secretary of War: "What do you think our chances are?"

The Secretary looked at him. "Against the squires, about even. Against the Dakotians, one to five. Against both, none." He held out a handful of dispatches. These told of the success of the Sons of the Vikings in extending their hold in the southwest, not surprising considering that the only division of regulars in that area were natives of the region and had gone over to the rebels. More dispatches described in brief fragments the attack of a powerful and fast-moving Dakotian army west of Lake Yanktonai (Michigan). The last of these was dated 6 P.M., June 26th, the preceding day.

"What's happened since then?" asked Park.

"Don't know," said the Secretary. Just then a message came in from the First Division. It told little, but the dateline told much. It had been sent from the city of Edgar, at the south of Lake Yanktonai.

Park looked at his map, and whistled. "But an army *can't* retreat fifty miles in one day!"

"The staff can," said the Secretary. "They ride."

Further speculation about the fate of the First Division seemed unnecessary. The one-eyed Colonel Montrose was dictating an announcement for the press to the effect that: "Our army has driven off severe Dakotian attacks in the Edgar area, with heavy losses to the foe. Nine Dakotian war-wains were destroyed and five were captured. Other military booty included twenty-six machine-pipes. Two foeish airwains were shot down. . ."

Park thought, this Montrose has a good imagination, which quality seems sadly lacking in most of the officers. Maybe we can do something with him—if we're still here long enough. . .

The Secretary pulled Park outside. "Looks as though they had us. We haven't anything to fick with. Not even brains. General Higgins is just an easy-going parade-ground soldier who never expected to have to shoot at anybody in his life. For that matter neither did I. Got any ideas?"

"Still thinking, brother," said Park, studying his map. "I'm nay soldier either, you know; just a thingman. If I could give you any help it would be political."

"Well, if we can't win by fickting, politics would seem to be the only way left."

"Maybe." Park was still looking at the map. "I begin to have a thock. Let's see Higgins."

Fortunately for Park's idea, General Higgins was not merely easygoing; he was positively comatose. He sat in his tent with his blouse unbuttoned and a bottle of beer in front of him, serene in the midst of worry and confusion.

"Come in, thanes, come in," he said. "Have some beer. Pfff. Got any ideas? Blessed if I know where to turn next. Nay artillery, nay airwains to speak of, nay real soldiers. Pfff. Do you guess if we started fortifying New Belfast now, it'd be strong enough to hold when we were pushed back there? Nobody knows anything, pfff. I'm supposed to have a staff, but half of 'em have got lost or sneaked off to join the rebels. Blessed if I know what to do next."

Park thought General Higgins would make a splendid Salvation Army general. But there was no time for personalities. He sprang his plan.

"Goodness gracious!" said Higgins. "It sounds very risky—get Colonel Callahan."

The Sachem filled the tent-opening when he arrived, weaving lightly. "Somebody want me?" Belatedly he remembered to salute.

Higgins barked at him: "Colonel Callahan, do you ken you have your blouse on *backwards?*"

Callahan looked down. "So I have, ha-ha. Sir."

"That's a very weighty matter. Very weighty. No, don't change it here. You're drunk, too."

"So are—" Callahan suppressed an appalling violation of discipline just in time. "Maybe I had a little, Sir."

"That's very weighty, very weighty. Just think of it. I ought to have you shot."

Callahan grinned. "What would my regiment do then?"

"I don't know. What would they do?"

"Give you three guesses, Sir. *Hic.*"

"Run away, I suppose."

"Right the first time, Sir. Congratulations."

"Don't congratulate me, you fool! The Secretary has a plan."

"A plan, really? Haw, Thane Park; I didn't see you. How do you like our army?"

Park said: "I think it's the goddamndest thing I ever saw in my life. It's a galloping nightmare."

"Oh, come now," said Higgins. "Some of the brave boys are a little green, but it's not as bad as all that."

A very young captain entered, gave a heel-click that would have echoed if there had been anything for it to echo against, and said: "Sir, the service company, twentieth regiment, third division, has gone on strike."

"What?" said the general. "Why?"

"No food, Sir. The goodwains arrived empty."

"Have them all shot. No, shoot one out of ten. No, wait a minute. Arrived empty, you say? Somebody stole the food to sell to the local grocers. Take a platoon and clean out all the goods shops in Guggenvik. Pay them in thingly I.O.U.'s."

The Secretary interjected: "The Althing will never pay those off, you know."

"I know they won't, ha-ha. Now let's get down to that plan of yours."

The names were all different; Allister Park gave up trying to remember those of the dozens of small towns through which they rolled. But the gently rolling stretches of southern Indiana were much the same, cut up into a checkerboard of fields with woodlots here and there, and an occasional snaky line of cottonwoods marking the course of a stream. The Vinlanders had not discovered the beauties of billboard advertising, which, to Park's mind, was something. Not having a businessman's point of view, he had no intention of introducing this charming feature of his own civilization into Vinland. The Vinlanders did have their diabolical habit of covering the landscape with smoke from faulty burners in their wains, and that was bad enough.

A rising whistle and a shattering bang from the rear made Park jump around in the seat of his wain. A mushroom of smoke and dust was rising from a hillside.

The airwain that had dropped the bomb was banking slowly to turn away. The pneumatics clattered all along the column, but without visible effect. A couple of their own machines purred over and chased the bomber off.

Those steam-turbine planes were disconcertingly quiet things. On the other hand the weight of their power plants precluded them from carrying either a heavy bomb load or a lot of fuel, so they were far from a decisive arm. They rustled across the sky with the dignity of dowagers, seldom getting much over 150 miles an hour, and their battles had the deliberation of a duel between sailing ships-of-the-line.

They wound down to the sunny Ohio (they called it the Okeeyo, both derived from the same Iroquois word) in the region where the airwains had reported the rebel army. A rebel airwain—a converted transport ship—came to look them over, and was shot down. From across the river came faintly the rebel yells and the clatter of pneumatics, firing at targets far out of range. Park guessed that discipline in Brahtz's outfit was little if any better than in his own.

Now, if they wanted to, the stage was set for an interminable campaign of inaction. Either side could try to sneak its men across the river without being

caught in the act by the other. Or it could adopt a defensive program, contenting itself with guarding all the likely crossings. That sort of warfare would have suited General Higgins fine, minimizing as it did the chance that most of his musical-comedy army would do a lightning advance to the rear as soon as they came under fire.

It would in fact have been sound tactics, if they could have counted on the rebels' remaining on the south bank of the Okeeyo in that region, instead of marching east toward Guggenvik, and if the Dakotians were not likely to descend on their rear at any moment.

The Secretary of War had gone back to New Belfast, leaving Park the highest-ranking civilian with Higgins's army. He had the good sense to keep out of sight as much as possible, taking into account the soldier's traditional dislike of the interfering politician.

General Etheling, commanding the rebel army, got a message asking if he would hold a parley with a civilian envoy of General Higgins's army. General Etheling, wearing a military blouse over a farmer's overalls and boots, pulled his long mustache and said no, if Higgins wants to parley with me he can come himself. Back came the answer: This is a *very* high-ranking civilian; in fact he outranks Higgins himself. Would that island in the middle of the Okeeyo do? Etheling pulled his mustache some more and decided it would do.

So, next morning General Etheling, wearing the purely ornamental battle-ax that formed part of the Vinland officer's dress uniform, presented himself off the island. As he climbed out of his rowboat, he saw his opposite number's boat pull away from the far side of the little island. He advanced a way among the cottonwoods and yelled: "Haw!"

"Haw." A stocky blond man appeared.

"You all alone, Thane?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll be jiggered! You boys kin go along back; I'll holler when I need you. Now, Thane, who be you?"

"I'm Bishop Ib Scoglund, General."

"*What?* But ain't you the wick who started the whole rumpus with all that silly talk about ricks for the Skrellings?"

The bishop sighed. "I did what I believed right in the sight of the Lord. But now a greater danger threatens us. The Dakotians are sweeping across our fair land like the hosts of Midian, of old! Surely it were wise to sink our little bickerings in the face of this peril?"

"You say the lousy redskins is doing an invasion? Well, now, that's the first I heered of that. What proof you got?"

Park produced an assortment of papers: dispatches, a copy of the *Edgar Daily Tidings,* etcetera.

The general was at last convinced. He said: "Well, I'll be tarnally damned. Begging your pardon, Hallow; I forgot as how you were a preacher."

"That's all rick, my son. There are times when, even in a cleric like me, the baser passions rise, and it is all I can do to refrain from saying 'damn' myself."

"Well, now, that's rick handsome of you. But what does old Cottonhead Higgins want me to do? I got my orders, you know."

"I know, my son. But don't you see the Divine will in these events? When we His children fall out and desecrate the soil of Vinland with out brothers' blood, He chastises us with the scourge of invasion. Let us unite to hurl back the heathen before it is too late! General Higgins has a plan for joint doing all worked out. If you take it up, he will prove his good faith by letting you cross the Okeeyo unopposed."

"What kind of plan is it? I never knew Cottonhead had enough brains to plan a barn-dance, not to mention a campaign."

"I couldn't give you all the details; they're in this paper. But I know they call for your army to put itself in the path of the invaders, and when you are engaged with them for our army to attack their left flank. If we lose, our brotherly quarrel will be one with Sodom and Gomorrah. If we win, it will be surely possible to settle our strife without further bloodshed. You will be a great man in the sight of the people and a good one in the sight of Heaven, General."

"Well, I guess maybe as how you're right. Give me the rest of the day to study these here plans . . ."

They shook hands; the general made a fumbling salute, and went over to his side of the island to call his boat. Thus, he did not see the bishop hastily don his mustache and spectacles.

When General Etheling's rebels crossed the river next morning, they found no trace of Higgins' force except for the usual camp-litter. Following directions, they set out for Edgar.

General Higgins, goaded to hurry by Allister Park, sent his army rolling northward. People in dust-colored work-clothes came out to hang over fences and stare at them.

Park asked one of these, a strapping youth with some Skrelling blood, if he had heard of the invasion.

"Sure," said the man. "Reckon they won't git this fur, though. So we ain't worrying." The young man laughed loudly at the suggestion of volunteering. "Me go off and git shot up so some other wick can sit on his rump and get rich? Not me, Thane! If the folks in Edgar gets scalped, it serves 'em right for not paying us mair for our stuff."

As the army moved farther and farther toward Edgar, the expressions of the civilians grew more anxious. As they approached the Piankishaw (Wabash) River, they passed wains parked by the roads, piled with household goods.

However, when the army had passed, many of these reversed their direction and followed the army back north toward their homes. Park was tempted to tell some of these people what idiots they were, but that would hardly have been politic. The army had little enough self-confidence as it was.

Higgins's army spread out along the south bank of the Piankishaw. All those in the front line had, by order, stained their hands and faces brown. The genuine Skrellings were kept well back.

Park took an observation post overlooking the main crossing of the river. He had just settled himself when there was a tremendous purring hum from the other side of the bridge. An enemy warwain appeared. Its ten tires screeched in unison as it stopped at the barrier on the road. Pneumatics began to pop on all sides. The forward turret swung back and forth, its gun clattering. Then a tremendous bang sent earth, bridge, and wain into the air. The wain settled into the water on its side, half out. Some men crawled out and swam for the far shore, bullets kicking up little splashes around their bobbing heads.

Up the river, Park could see a pontoon boat putting out from the north shore. It moved slowly by poling; passed out of sight. In a few minutes it reappeared, drifting downstream. It came slowly past Park and stopped against a ruined bridge-abutment. Water gradually leaked through the bullet-holes in the canvas, until only one corner was above water. A few arms and faces bobbed lazily just below the surface.

The firing gradually died down. Park could imagine the Dakotians scanning the position with their field-glasses and planning their next move. If their reputation was not exaggerated, it would be something devastating.

He climbed down from his perch and trotted back to head-quarters, where he found Rufus Callahan, sober for once.

Ten minutes later the two, preceded by an army piper, exposed themselves at the east end of the bridge. Park carried a white flag, and the piper squealed "parlay" on his instrument. Nobody shot at them, so they picked their way across the bridge, climbing along the twisted girders. Callahan got stuck.

"I'm scared of high places," he said through his teeth, clinging to the ironwork.

Park took out his air-pistol. "You'll be worse scared of me," he growled. The huge man was finally gotten under way again.

At the far end, a Skrelling soldier jumped out of the bushes, rifle ready. He crackled something at them in Dakotian. Callahan answered in the same language, and the man took them in tow.

As the road curved out of sight of the river, Park began to see dozens of warwains pulled up to the side of the road. Some had their turrets open, and red men sat in them, smoking or eating sandwiches. There were other vehicles, service cars of various kinds, and horse cavalry with lances and short rifles. They stopped by one warwain. Their escort snapped to a salute that

must have jarred his bones. An officer climbed out. He wore the usual mustard-colored Dakotian uniform, topped off with the feathered warbonnet of the Sioux Indian. After more chattering, Park and Callahan were motioned in.

It was crowded inside. Park burned the back of his hand against a steam-pipe, and cut loose with a string of curses that brought admiring grins to the red-brown faces of the crew. Everything was covered with coal-soot.

The engineer opened the throttle, and the reciprocating engine started to chug. Park could not see out. They stopped presently and got out and got into another warwain, a very large one.

Inside the big machine were a number of Dakotian officers in the red-white-and-black war-bonnets. A fat one with a little silver war-club hanging from his belt was introduced to Park and Callahan as General Tashunkanitko, governor of the Oglala and commander-in-chief of the present expedition.

"Well?" snapped this person in a high-pitched, metallic voice.

Callahan gave his sloppy salute—which at first glance looked alarmingly as though he were thumbing his nose—and said: "I'm representing the commander of the Skrelling Division—"

"The *what?*"

"The Skrelling Division. We've been ordered by the Althing to put down the uprising of the Diamonds in the southwest of Vinland. They have a big army, and are likely to win all Vinland if not stopped. We can't stop them, and on the other hand we can't let them take all the south while you take all the north of Vinland.

"My commander humbly suggests that it is hardly proper for two armies of men of the same race to fick each other while their joint foe takes over all Vinland, as Brahtz's army will do unless we join against it."

General Tashunkanitko crackled something to one of his men, who rattled back. The general said: "It *was* taled that your men looked like Skrellings, but we could not get close enough to be sure, and did not believe the tale. What do you offer?"

Callahan continued: "My commander will not try to push the Dakotians from the area west of the Piankishaw, if you will help him against the rebels."

"Does that offer bind your thing?"

"Nay. But, as our army is the only real one at present under their command, they'll have nay way of enforcing their objections. To prove our good faith we will, if you agree, let you cross the Piankishaw without fickting."

The general thought for some seconds. He said: "That offer ock to be put up to my government."

"Nay time, Sir. The rebels are moving north from the Okeeyo already. Anyway, if we make a truce aside from our thing, you should be willing to do the same. After we've overthrown the Brahtz army, I'm sure we can find some workable arrangement between our armies."

Tashunkanitko thought again. "I will do it. Have you a plan worked out?"

"Yes, Sir. Right here. . ."

When the Dakotians crossed the Piankishaw the next day, there was no sign of the large and supposedly redskin army that had held the passage against them.

Across the rolling Indiana plain came the rattle of pneumatic rifles and the crack of air- and mortar-bombs. General Higgins told Park: "We just got a message from General Etheling; says he's hard pressed, and it's about time we did our flank attack on the Dakotians. And this General Tush—Tash—General Mad-Horse wants to know why we haven't attacked the flank of the rebels. Says he's still pushing 'em back, but they outnumber him twa to ane and he's had a lot of mechanical breakdowns. Says if we'll hit them now they'll run."

"We don't want to let either side win," said Park. "Guess it's time to start."

With considerable confusion—though perhaps less than was to be expected—the Army of New Belfast got under way. It was strung out on a five-mile front at right angles to the line of contact of the Dakotian and rebel armies. The right wing was the stronger, since it would meet stronger resistance from Tashunkanitko's hardened professionals than from Etheling's armed hayseeds.

Park squeezed into the observation turret of the headquarters wain beside Higgins. They went slowly so as not to outrun the infantry, lurching and canting as the huge rubber doughnut-shaped wheels pulled them over walls and fences. They crunched through one corner of a farmyard, and the countryside was at once inundated by fleeing pigs and chickens. Park had a glimpse of an overalled figure shaking a fist at the wain. He couldn't help laughing; it was too bad about the farmer's livestock, but there was something ultra-rural about the man's indignation over a minor private woe when a battle was going on next door.

Men began to appear ahead; horsemen leaping fences and ditches scattered scouts dodging from tree to fence, firing at unseen targets, then frantically working the pump-levers of their rifles to compress the air for the next shot. One of them was not a hundred yards away when he saw the advancing wains. He stared stupidly at them until the forward machine-gunner in the headquarters wain fired a burst that sent the gravel flying around the scout's feet. The scout jumped straight up and came down running. Others ran when they saw the wains looming out of the dust. A few who didn't see soon enough ran toward the advancing line with their hands up.

They met larger groups of redskins, crawling or running from right to left with faces set. Each time there would be one face the first to turn; then they would all turn. The group would lose its form and purpose, sublimating into its component human atoms. Some stood; some ran in almost any direction.

Then they were in a half-plowed field. The plow and the steam tractor stood deserted among the brown furrows. On the other side of the field

crouched a hostile wain. Park felt the engine speed up as the two machines lumbered toward each other. Bullets pattered about his cupola. It gratified him to see the general wince when they struck on and around the glass.

The wains came straight at each other. Park gripped the hand-holds tight. The other wain stopped suddenly, backed swiftly, and tried to run in at them from the side. Their own jumped ahead with a roar. Its ram dug into the side of the other machine with a terrible crash. They backed away; Park could see lubricating oil running out of the wound in the other machine. It still crawled slowly. His own mechanical rhinoceros charged again. This time the other machine heaved up on its far wheels and fell over. . .

The fight went out of the Dakotians all of a sudden. They had made a terrific assault on twice their number; then had fought steadily for two days. Their wains were battered, their horses hungry, and their infantry exhausted from pumping up their rifles. And to have a horde of strangers roll up their flank, just when victory was in sight—no wonder General Tashunkanitko, and his officers, let a tear or two trickle when they were rounded up.

General Etheling's rebels fared no better; rather worse, in fact. The Skrelling regiment ran wild among the rural Vinlanders, doing what they had wanted to do for generations—scalp the palefaces. Having somewhat hazy ideas about that ancestral ritual, they usually made the mistake of trying to take off the whole top of a man's head instead of the neat little two-inch circle of scalp. When they started in on the prisoners, they had to be restrained by a few bursts of machine-gun fire from one of Higgins's wains.

The train back to New Belfast stopped at every crossroads so the people could come out and whoop. They cheered Allister Park well enough; they cheered Rufus Callahan; they yelled for Bishop Scoglund. The story had gone ahead, how Park and General Higgins had devised a scheme for the entrapment of both the rebel and Dakotian armies; how the brave bishop had talked Etheling into it; how Etheling had treacherously shot the brave bishop; how Callahan had swum the Okeeyo with Bishop Scoglund on his back. . . It was rumored that the city politician Allister Park had had something to do with these developments, but you never want to believe anything good of these politicians. Since he was Assistant Secretary of War, though, it was only polite to give him a cheer too. . .

Park did not think it would be prudent to show himself to the same audience both as Park and as the bishop, so they were all informed that his hallowship was recuperating.

As they rolled into New Belfast, Park experienced the let-down feeling that comes at such moments. What next? By now Noggle would have been rescued from Park's knicks and returned to Edwy Borup's hatch. That was bound to happen anyway, which was why Park hadn't tried to use that method of get-

ting Noggle into his power before. The whirling of the wheel of if was a delicate business, not to be interrupted, by people with warrants, and he would have to see to it that somebody were left behind to force Noggle to stop the wheel when the right point had been reached.

It ought not to be difficult now, though. If he couldn't use his present power and position to get hold of Noggle, he'd have enough after election—which would come off as scheduled after all. First he'd make Noggle stop poor old Kedrick's wheel. Then he'd have Callahan or somebody stand over Noggle with a gun while he spun his, Park's, wheel through another half-turn. Then, maybe, Noggle would be allowed to halt his own carousel.

For the first three days after his return he was too busy to give attention to this plan. Everybody in New Belfast seemingly had written him or telephoned him or called at one of his two homes to see him. Although Monkey-face was a lousy secretary, Park didn't dare hire another so long as he had his double identity to maintain.

But the Antonini trials were due in a week, back in that other world. And the heirs and assigns of Trigvy Darling had had a date set for a hearing on their damage claim. And, if Park knew his history, there would probably be a "reconstruction" period in the revolted territories, of which he wanted no part.

For the second time Edwy Borup had his sanctuary invaded by Allister Park and a lot of tough-looking official persons, including Rufus Callahan. Borup was getting resigned if not reconciled to this. If they didn't let his prize patient Noggle escape before, they weren't likely to this time.

"Haw, Noggle," said Park. "Feel a little more withdoing?"

"Nay," snapped Noggle. "But since you have me by the little finger, I suppose I'll have to do what you say."

"All right. You're honest, anyway. First you're going to stop Bretwald Kedrick's wheel. Bring him in, boys."

"But I daren't stop a wheel without my downwritings. You bethink last time—"

"That's all right; we brought your whole damn library over. "

There was nothing to it. Noggle stared at the fidgety Bretwald—the period of whose cycle was fortunately just twice his, so that both were in their own bodies at the same time. Then he said: "Whew. Had a lot of psychic momentum, that ane; I just did stop him. He'll be all rick now. What next?"

Park told everybody but Callahan to go out. Then he explained that Noggle was to give his wheel another half turn.

"But," objected Noggle, "that'll take seven days. What's going to be done with your body in the meantime?"

"It'll be kept here, and so will you. When the halfcycle's done, you'll stop my wheel, and then we'll let you stop your own whenever you like. I've made

sure that you'll stay here until you do the right thing by my wheel, whether you cure your own case or not."

Noggle sighed. "And MacSvensson thock he'd get some simple-minded idealist like the bishop! How is it that your pattern of acting is otherly from his, when by the laws of luck you started out with much the same forebearish make-up?"

Park shrugged. "Probably because I've had to fick every step of the way, while he was more or less born into his job. We're not so otherly, at that; his excess energy went into social crusading, while mine's gone into politics. I *have* an ideal or two kicking around somewhere. I'd like to meet Bishop Scoglund some time; think I'd like him."

"I'm afraid that's undoable," said Noggle. "Even sending you back is risky. I don't know what would happen if your body died while his mind indwelt it. You might land in still another doable world instead of in your ain. Or you mick not land anywhere."

"I'll take a chance," said Park. "Ready?"

"Yes." Dr. Joseph Noggle stared at Park. . .

"Hey, Thane Park," said a voice from the doorway. "A wick named Dunedin wants to see you. Says it's weighty."

"Tell him I'm busy—no, I'll see him."

Monkey-face appeared, panting. "Have you gone yet? Have you changed? Glory to Bridget! You—I mean his hallowship—what I mean is, the Althing signed a treaty with the Dakotians and Cherogians and such, setting up an International Court of the Continent of Skrelleland, and the bishop has been chosen one of the judges! I thock you ock to know before you did anything."

"Well, well," said Park. "That's interesting, but I don't know that it changes anything."

Callahan spoke up: "I think you'd make a better judge, Allister, than *he* would. He's a fine fellow, but he will believe that everybody else is as uprick as he. They'd pull the wool over his eyes all the time."

Park pondered. After all, what had he gone to all this trouble for—why had he helped turn the affairs of half the continent upside down—except to resume a career as public prosecutor which, he hoped, would some day land him on the bench? And here was a judgeship handed him on a platter.

"I'll stay," he said.

"But," objected Noggle, "how about those thirteen other men on your wheel? Are you going to leave them out of their rick rooms?"

Park grinned. "If they're like me, they're adaptable guys who've probably got started on new careers by now. If we shift 'em all again, it'll just make more trouble for them. Come along, Rufus."

The funeral of Allister Park, assistant Secretary of War, brought out thousands of people. Some were politicians who had been associated with Park; some

came for the ride. A few came because they liked the man.

In an anteroom of the cathedral, Bishop Scoglund waited for that infernal music to end, whereupon he would go out and preach the swellest damn funeral oration New Belfast had ever heard. It isn't given to every man to conduct that touching ceremony for his own corpse, and the bishop intended to give his alter-ego a good send-off.

In a way he was sorry to bid Allister Park good-bye. Allister had a good deal more in common with his natural, authentic self than did the bishop. But he couldn't keep up the two identities forever, and with the judgeship on one hand and the damage-suit on the other there wasn't much question of which of the two would have to be sacrificed. The pose of piety would probably become natural in time. The judgeship would give him an excuse for resigning his bishopric. Luckily the Celtic Christian Church had a liberal attitude toward folk who wished to leave the church. Of course he'd still have to be careful—girl friends and such. Maybe it would even be worth while getting married . . .

"What the devil—what do you wish, my son?" said the bishop, looking up into Figgis's unpleasant face.

"You know what I wish, you old goat! What are you going to do about my wife?"

"Why, friend, it seems that you have been the subject of a monstrous fooling!"

"You bet I—"

"Please, do not shout in the house of God! What I was saying was that the guilty man was none other than the late Allister Park, may the good Lord forgive his sins. He has been impersonating me. As you know, we looked much alike. Allister Park upowned to me on his death-bed two days ago. No doubt his excesses brought him to his untimely end. Still, for all his human frailties, he was a man of many good qualities. You will forgive him, will you not?"

"But—but I—"

"Please, for my sake. You would not speak ill of the dead, would you?"

"Oh, hell. Your forgiveness, Bishop. I thock I had a good thing, that's all. G'bye. Sorry."

The music was coming to an end. The bishop stood up, straightened his vestments, and strode majestically out. If he could only count on that drunken nitwit Callahan not to forget himself and bust out laughing . . .

The coffin, smothered in flowers, was, like all coffins in Vinland, shaped like a Viking longboat. It was also filled with pine planks. Some people were weeping a bit. Even Callahan, in the front row, was appropriately solemn.

"Friends, we have gathered here to pay a last gild to one who has passed from among us . . ."

Tiger in the Rain

I once saw a tiger run through the rain,
From elephant-back upon Assam's plain.
He galloped full-tilt at a herd of deer,
Which grazed on the edge of a thicket of cane.

The deer fled away from his onslaught grim;
I wanted a picture, but the light was too dim.
He glared about him and entered the cane;
He bothered me not, nor did I him.

But I thought that I ought to have tipped my hat
As he bounded over the marshy flat,
For there went the oldest foe of my race:
The cave-man's nightmare, the giant cat.

Today that cat, who so hungrily ran,
Survives on sufferance, at truce with man.
For man has mastered the beasts; instead,
Now men upon other men prey as they can.

And thus I thought on that lush, green plain,
As I watched that tiger run through the rain.

Balsamo's Mirror

My friend in Providence took long walks, especially at night. He loved to end up at a graveyard, an abandoned church, or some such site. Since he earned a meager living by writing for *Creepy Stories*, he claimed that these walks inspired him with ideas. In any case, one such walk that he took with me gave him some ideas he had not foreseen.

When I was an undergraduate at M.I.T., my people lived too far away, in upstate New York, for frequent visits home. So on weekends, when up on my studies, I rattled over from Cambridge in my Model A to see my friend. We had become pen pals through the letters column of *Creepy Stories*. I had invited myself over, and we had found each other congenial in spite of differences of outlook, age, and temperament.

I used to love to argue. A thing I liked about my friend was that he could argue intelligently and always good-naturedly on more subjects than anyone I ever knew. Some of his ideas were brilliant; some I thought were crazy but later came to agree with; some I still think were crazy.

We found plenty to debate about. Politics was hot stuff, with the Depression still in full swing the year after Roosevelt had closed the banks. I was pretty conservative still, while my friend had just been converted from a Mesozoic conservative to an ardent New Dealer. Another young student, who sometimes dropped in, was a red-hot Communist sympathizer. So we went at it hot and heavy.

We also disputed religion. My friend was a scientific materialist and atheist; I was still a believing Christian. We argued esthetics. He defended art for art's sake; I though that philosophy a pretext for indolence and had no use for idlers, whether rich, arty, or plain lazy.

We wrangled over international affairs. He wanted America to rejoin the British Empire; I was for splendid isolation. We argued history. He was devoted to the eighteenth century; I thought that men wearing wigs over good heads of hair looked silly.

"Willy," he said, "you are looking at the superficies only. The perukes are not significant. What is important is that this was the last period before the

Industrial Revolution, with all its smoke and rattling machinery and hypertrophied cities and other horrors. Therefore, in a sense, this was the most gracious, elegant, civilized time we have ever seen or shall ever see."

"What," I said, "would you do with the surplus nine tenths of humanity, whom you'd have to get rid of if we went back to eighteenth-century technology? Starve them? Shoot them? Eat them?"

"I didn't say we could or should go back to pre-industrial technology. The changes since then were inevitable and irreversible. I only said . . ."*

We were still arguing when we set out on one of our nocturnal prowls. My friend could always find something to show the visitor. *This,* he would explain, was the house once owned by a famous Colonial pirate; *that* was the site of the tavern where he was seized before being hanged; and so on.

This balmy May evening, under a gibbous moon, my friend was on the track of a piece of Colonial architecture on Federal Hill. We hiked down the steep incline of Angell Street to the center of Providence. Thence we continued west up the gentler slope of Westminster Avenue, where the restaurants were called trattorias. Near Dexter Street, we turned off and trudged around little back streets until we found the Colonial house.

The doorway was still there, but the rest of the ground floor had been eviscerated to make room for a small machine shop. My friend clucked. "Damned Dagoes!" he muttered. "A pox on 'em." His ethnic prejudices, although weakening, were still pretty strong.

We examined the doorway with my pocket flashlight, my friend being too absent-minded to think of bringing his own. At last we started back. We had already walked two miles, and the climb back up Angell promised a rigorous workout. Since it was night, we could not use the elevators in the County Court House, at the foot of the slope, to save ourselves some of the climb.

In this tangle of alleys, my friend took a wrong turn. He quickly realized his error, saying: "No, Willy, it's this way. This should take us back to Westminster. I don't think I know this street."

As we neared the avenue, we passed a row of little shops, including a Chinese laundry. Nearly all were closed, although ahead we could see the lights of restaurants, bars, and a movie house on Westminster. My friend put out a hand to stop me before one place, still lit, in the row of darkened shops.

"What's this?" he said. "Damme, sirrah, it hath the look of a den of unholy mysteries!" He talked like that when in his eighteenth-century mood.

The dim-lit sign in the window said: MADAME FATIMA NOSI. FORTUNES TOLD. SPEAK WITH YOUR DEAR DEPARTED. OCCULT WISDOM SHARED. A crude painting beneath the legend showed a gypsylike woman bent over a crystal ball.

"I can just imagine," said my friend. "This is the center of a secret, sinister

cult. They're a gang of illegal immigrants from Kafiristan, where the ancient paganism survives. They worship a chthonian deity, which is in fact a gelatinous being that oozes its way through solid rock . . ."

"Why not go in and see?" I said. "Madame Nosi seems open for business."

"Oh, you're so practical, Willy!" said my friend. "I had rather gaze upon this cryptic lair from afar and let my imagination soar. Inside, it is probably dirty, squalid, and altogether prosaic. Besides, our sibyl will expect remuneration, and I am badly straitened just now."

"I've got enough dough for both," I said. "Come on!"

It required urging, because my friend was a shy man and sensitive about his perennial poverty. This indigence was curious, considering his gifts and intellect. A few minutes later, however, we were in Madame Nosi's oratory.

The place was as dingy as my friend had predicted. Fatima Nosi proved a tall, strongly built, bony woman of middle age, with a big hooked nose and graying black hair hanging down from under her head scarf.

"Well," said she, "what can I do for you gentlemans?" She spoke with an accent, which did not sound Italian. She looked hard at me. "You are college student, no?"

"Yes."

"At the—um—the Massachusetts Institute of the Technology, yes?"

"Yes."

"And you expect to graduation in—umm—two year, no?"

"That's right," I said, surprised at her prescience. "Name, please?"

"Wilson Newbury."

She wrote in a little notebook. "And you!" she turned to my friend. When she had written his name, she said: "You are writer, no?"

"I," said my friend, "am a gentleman who sometimes writes for his own amusement and that of his friends." His face tensed with the effort of trying to speak a foreign language without stuttering. "*P-parlate italiano?*" He got it out slowly, with a pronounced down-east accent.

She looked puzzled; then her face cleared. "*Cosi, cosio.* But I am not Italian, me, even though I was born in Italy."

"What are you, then, if I may be so bold?" asked my friend.

"I am Tosk."

"Oh, Albanian!" he exclaimed. He said aside to me: "It fits. She's a perfect example of the Dinaric racial type, and that name didn't sound quite Italian." He turned back. "I am honored; *sono—sono onorato.*"

"Tank you. Is many Albanians in Italy," said Madame Nosi. "They went there two, tree hundred years ago to excape the Turks. And now, what can I do for you? Horoscope? Seance? Crystal ball? I tink, you smart gentlemans no care for simple occult manifestations. You tell me what you most want. You, please." She indicated my friend.

He thought a long moment and said: "Madame, the thing whereof I am most desirous is to view the world as it was at the climax of Western civilization—that is to say, in the eighteenth century. No, permit me to amend that. It is to witness the most civilized part of that world—England—at that period."

"Umm." Madame Nosi looked doubtful. "Is difficult. But then, maybe I get chance to use the mirror of Balsamo. You got to come upstairs to inner sanctum."

She led us up creaking steps to a shabby little sitting room. Stepping to the side of the room, she pulled a cloth cover off a mirror on the wall. This mirror, otherwise ordinary-looking, had an ornately carven frame whence most of the gilding had worn off.

My friend leaned towards me and murmured: "This should be interesting. Giuseppe Balsamo, alias Count Alessandro di Cagliostro, was the most egregious faker and charlatan of the eighteenth century. Wonder what she'll do?"

"This," said Madame Nosi, "will cost you ten dollars. Is a very powerful spell. It exhaust my weak heart. If your friend want to go along with you, it cost him ten buck, too."

My friend looked stricken, as well he might. For ten dollars, one could then eat in a good restaurant for a week. Twenty sounded steep to me, also; but I had lately received a check from home and did not like to back out. Had I been older and bolder, I might have haggled—something I knew my friend could never bring himself to do. I pulled out my wallet.

"Tank you," said Madame Nosi. "Now, you sit here facing the mirror. You, too. I will light candles on this ting behind you. Look at reflections of the candles in glass."

She lit a sconce on the opposite wall. In the dimness, the reflections of my friend and me were little more than shapes. I took my eyes off the image of my gaunt, lantern-jawed friend and raised them to that of the cluster of wavering lights.

Madame Nosi bustled about behind us. A sweetish smell told me that she had lit incense. She began to croon a song in a language I did not recognize.

I cannot tell exactly when her spell, or whatever it was, took effect, any more than one can tell exactly when one drops off to sleep and begins to dream. But I presently found myself trudging a dirt road, overgrown with foot-high grass between two deep, narrow ruts.

This experience, I soon discovered, was not a simple case of time travel, such as one reads about. In stories, the time traveler arrives in another time *in propria persona*, able to act and function as he would in his own time. I, however, found myself in someone else's body, seeing and hearing with his organs and able to follow his thoughts but helpless to affect my host's actions. I could

not even crane his neck or roll his eyes to see anything that he did not wish to look at. Now his gaze was fixed on the ground before him to avoid a stumble.

This situation avoided the familiar time-travel paradox. While I partook of all my host's experiences, mental and physical, I could not do anything that would change an event that had already taken place. Whether this adventure should be explained as a return to a former time, or the vision of former events imposed upon my present-day mind, or sheer illusion, I cannot judge.

I could only sense the thoughts that ran through my host's conscious mind; I could not plumb his store of memories. Hence I had no way of finding out who or where or when I was, until my host happened to think of such things or until someone or something else gave me a clue.

"Now remember, lad," said a creaky voice in my ear, "no gangling after the trollops, to the peril of thy immortal soul. And if we meet the squire and his Macaroni zon, keep thy temper no matter what they zay."

At least, this is what I think he said. So strong was his unfamiliar dialect that, until I got used to it, I caught only half his words.

My host did me the favor of turning his head to look at his companion. He said: "Oh, hold thy water, Vayther. I'faith, I'm a grown man, can take care o' meself."

"Childhood and youth are vanity. Ecclesiastes eleven," said the other. "Thy loose tongue'll get us hanged yet."

"Unless thy poaching doth it virst," replied my host.

"I do but take that dominion over the vowls of the air and the beasts of the vield, which God hath given me Zee Genesis one. 'Tis wrong o' Sir Roger to deny us poor volk the use of 'em . . ."

My companion, evidently my host's father, continued grumbling before relapsing into silence. He was a man of mature years, with the gnarled brown hands and deeply creased brown neck of a lifelong outdoor worker. He wore the knee breeches and full-skirted coat of the eighteenth century, but these were of coarse, self-colored homespun, patched and darned. His calves were clad in a pair of baggy, soiled cotton stockings, and his big, shapeless shoes did not differ as to right and left.

On his head rode a large, full-bottomed, mouse-colored wig, which hung to his shoulders but from which half the hair had fallen out. On top of the wig was a stained, battered, wide-brimmed felt hat, turned up in back but otherwise allowed to droop in scallops.

Besides the wig, he also flaunted a full if straggly gray beard. I had thought that all men in this era were shaven.

I wondered if my friend was imprisoned in the body of the father, as I was in that of the son. If so, the beard was a good joke on him. As a devotee of the eighteenth century, my friend detested all hair on the face. He had long nagged me about my harmless little mustache. If indeed my friend was there, though, there was no way for me to communicate with him.

Then I thought: was I, too, wearing a wig? I could not tell. It would be an equally good joke on me, who despised wigs.

The pair subsided into silence, save for an occasional muttered remark. They were not great talkers. I could follow the thoughts of the son, but these did little to orient me. The jumble of names, faces, and scenes flickered past me too quickly to analyze.

I did learn that my host's name was William, that his father was a yeoman farmer, and that they were the only surviving members of their family. I also learned that the father had a feud with the local squire, and that they were on their way to a fair. From an allusion to Bristol, I gathered that we were somewhere in the Southwest of England. From the look of the vegetation, I surmised that it was springtime.

The open fields and woodlots gave way to a straggle of small houses, and these thickened into a village. From the height of the dim, ruddy orb that passes for sun in England, I judged that the time was about midday.

On the edge of the village roared the fair. There were swarms of rustics, clad more or less like my father (for so I had come to think of him). There were a few ladies and gentlemen in more photogenic eighteenth-century attire, with high heels and powdered wigs. Some younger men, I noted, wore their own hair in pigtails instead of wigs. My father's beard, however, was the only one in sight.

When we got into the crowd, the stink of unwashed humankind was overpowering. Although I, who smelled with his olfactory nerves, found it horrible, William seemed not to notice. I suppose he was pretty ripe himself. From the itches in various parts of his body, I suspected that he harbored a whole fauna of parasites.

Two teams were playing cricket. Beyond, young men were running and jumping in competition. There was a primitive merry-go-round, powered by an old horse. A boy followed the beast round and round, beating it to keep it moving. There were edibles and drinkables for sale; of the fairgoers, some were already drunk.

There were games of chance and skill: throwing balls and quoits at targets, guessing which walnut shell the pea was under, cards, dice, and a wheel of fortune. A row of tents housed human freaks and a large one, a camel. A cockfight and a puppet show, striving to outshout each other, were going on at the further end of the grounds.

My father would not let me squander our few pence on most of these diversions, but he paid tuppence for us to see the camel. This mangy-looking beast loftily chewed its cud while a man in an "Arab costume" made of old sheeting lectured on the camel's qualities. Most of what he said was wrong.

"Hola there!" cried a voice. I—or rather the William whose body I shared—

turned. One of the gentlemen was addressing us—a well-set-up man of middle years, with a lady on his arm.

"Stap me vitals," said this man, "if it beant old Phil!"

My father and I took off our hats and bowed. My father said: "God give you good day, Mayster Bradford! Good day, your la'ship! 'Tis an unexpected pleasure."

Bradford came up and shook my father's hand. "'Tis good for the optics to see you again, Philip. You, too, Will. Zookers, but ye've grown!"

"Aye, he's a good lad," said Philip. "The earth hath zwallowed all my hopes but un."

"The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Tell me, Phil, how goes it betwixt you and Sir Roger?"

"Ill enough," said my father. "E'er since the enclosure, he hath been at me to sell out me poor little patch to add to his grand acres."

"Why don't ye sell?" said Bradford. "I hear he hath offered a good price."

"Nay, zir, with all due respect, that I won't. Shirlaws ha' been there zince memory runneth not to the contrary, and I'll not be the virst to gi' it up. And if I did, 'twould not be to a titled villain who rides his damned vox hunt across me crops. Clean ruined last year's barley, he did."

"Same stubborn old Phil! Roger Stanwyck's not so bad a cully if ye get on's good side. For all's glouting humors, he doth good works of charity." Bradford lowered his voice. "Harkee, Phil, we're old friends, and ne'er mind the distinctions o' rank. Sell out to Sir Roger for the best price ye can get, but quit this contention. Otherwise, I shan't be able to answer for your well-being. *Verbum sat sapienti.*"

"What mean ye, zir?"

"In's cups, which is oft enough, he boasts that he'll have your land or have you dancing on the nubbing cheat ere the twelvemonth be out."

"Aye, zir?" said Philip.

"Aye verily, no question. I was there, at a party at Colonel Armitage's. Roger's the magistrate and can do't."

"He must needs ge' me dited and convicted virst."

"I' fackins, man, talk sense! With all the hanging offenses on the books, they can string you up for auft more heinous than spitting on the floor."

"Fie! Juries won't convict in such cases."

"If they happen to like you. I needn't tell you ye be not the most popular man hereabouts."

"Aye, Mayster Bradford, but wherefore? I lead a good Christian life."

"Imprimus, ye foft against the enclosure."

"Sartainly I did. 'Tis the doom o' the independent farmer."

"Me good Philip, the day of the old English yeoman is past. The country needs corn, and the only way to get it is to carve up all these wasteful com-

mons and put 'em to grain crops. Secundus, ye are a Methodist, and to these folk that's worse nor a Papist or a Jew. They'd be tickled to see a wicked heretic swing, specially since we haven't had a hanging in o'er a year."

"I believe what the Almighty and the Good Book tell me."

"Tertius, ye wear that damned beard."

"I do but obey the divine commands, zir. Zee Leviticus nineteen."

"And quartus, ye are learned beyond your station. I don't mind; I like to see the lower orders better themselves—within reason, o' course. But the villagers think ye give yourself airs and hate you for't."

"I only strive to obey God the more wisely by me little larning. Zee Proverbs one, vifth verse. As for zelling out to Zir Roger, I'll come to the parish virst."

Bradford sighed and threw up his hands. "Well, say not that I failed to warn you. But hark, if ye do sell, ye shall have a good place with me for the asking. It 'twon't be arra clodhopping chore, neither, but a responsible post with good pay. Ask me sarvents if I beant a good master."

"Well, thankee, zir, but—"

"Think it o'er." Bradford clapped Philip on the shoulder and went away with his wife.

We strolled about, bought a snack of bread and cheese, and watched the contests. William would have liked to spend money on the freak shows and the gambling games, but Philip sternly forbade. Then a shout brought us about.

"Hey, Shirlaw! Philip Shirlaw!"

We were addressed by a stout, red-faced man with a strip of gold lace on his three-cornered hat. He came swiftly towards us, poling himself along with a four-foot, gold-headed walking stick. With him was a gorgeously dressed young man, tall and slender. The young man carried his hat beneath his arm, because it could never have been fitted over his wig. This wig, besides the curls at the sides and the queue at the back, shot up in a foot-high pompadour in front.

The youth was as pale as the older one was ruddy and had black beauty spots glued to cheek and jaw. He languidly waved a pale, slender hand as he spoke.

"I'll have a word with thee, sarrah," said the red-faced one.

"Aye, your honor?" replied Philip.

"Not here, not here. Come to my house this afternoon—after dinner-time will do."

"Father!" said the youth. "You forget, Mr. Harcourt and's wife are dining with us." I noted that the young man dropped his final r's, like a modern Englishman, whereas the others with whom we had spoken did not.

"So he doth, so he doth," grumbled Sir Roger Stanwyck. "Make it within

the hour, Shirlaw. We're about to depart the fair, so tarry not!"

It was a long walk back from the fair to Sir Roger's mansion, but the squire would never have thought to offer us a lift in his coach.

Stanwyck House so swarmed with servants that it was a wonder they did not fall over one another. One of them ushered us into Sir Roger's study. I had little chance to observe the surroundings, save as William's vision happened to light on things; and he had been here before. There was, for instance, a pair of swords crossed behind a shield on the wall—but all made of glass, not steel.

Sir Roger, wineglass in hand, glowered at us from a big wing chair, then put on a forced smile. His son, seated at a harpsichord and playing something by Handel, left off his strumming and swung around.

"Now, Shirlaw!" barked Sir Roger. "I have argued with thee and pleaded with thee, to no avail. Art a stubborn old fart; s'bud, I'll give thee credit. To show me heart's in the right place, I'll raise me last offer to an hundred guineas even. 'Tis thrice what thy lousy patch is worth and will set thee up for life. But that's all; not a brass farden more. What say ye? What say ye?"

"Zorry, zir," said Philip. "I ha' gi'en you mine answer, and that's that. Me land stays mine."

They argued some more, while the son patted yawns. Sir Roger got redder and redder. At last he jumped up, roaring:

"All right, get out, thou Hanoverian son of a bitch! I'll Methodist thee! If one method won't sarve, there's a mort more in me locker. Get out!"

"Your honor may kiss mine arse," said Philip as he turned away.

Behind us, Sir Roger hurled his wineglass at us but missed. The glass shattered, and Sir Roger screamed: "John! Abraham! Throw me these rascals out! Fetch me sword, somebody! I'll qualify them to run for the geldings' plate! Charles, ye mincing milksop, why don't ye drub me these runagates?"

"La, Father, you know that I—" began the young man. The rest was lost in the distance as Philip and William walked briskly out, before the hired help could organize a posse. Behind us, the clock struck four.

I was myself filled with rage, both from that I got from William's mind and on my own account. If I had been in charge of William's body, I might have tried something foolish. It is just as well that I was not. In those days, a peasant simply did not punch a knight or baronet (whichever Sir Roger was) in the nose, no matter what the provocation.

We left the grounds by another path, which led across a spacious lawn. At the edge of this lawn, the ground dropped sharply. There was a retaining wall, where the surface descended almost vertically for six or eight feet into a shallow ditch. From this depression, the earth sloped gently up on the other side, almost to the level on the inner lawn. This structure, like a miniature fortifica-

tion, was called a ha-ha. Its purpose was to afford those in the house a distant, unobstructed grassy vista and at the same time keep the deer and other wild life away from the inner lawns and flower beds.

We descended a flight of steps, which cut through the ha-ha, and continued along a winding path. This path led over a brook and through a wood. On the edge of the brook, workmen were building a tea house in Chinese style, with red and black paint and gilding. As we followed the winding path through the wood, a rabbit hopped away.

"Hm," said Philip Shirlaw. "That o'erweening blackguard . . . And us wi' noft but bread and turnips in the house. Harkee, Will, Zir Roger dines at vive, doth he not?"

"Aye," said William. "'Twas vour, but that craichy zon o' his hath broft the new vashion vrom London."

"Well, now," said Philip, "meseems that God hath put us in the way of a bit o' flesh to spice our regiment. Wi' guests at Stanwyck House, the Stanwycks'll be close to home from vive to nigh unto midnight. Those ungodly gluttons dawdle vive or zix hours o'er their meat, and the pack o' zarvents'll be clustered round to uphold Zir Roger's hospitality. By the time they're throf, Zir Roger'll be too drunk to know what betides."

"Dost plan to nab one o' his honor's coneys?"

"Aye, thof it an't Zir Roger's but God's."

"Oh, Vayther, have a care! Remember Mayster Bradford's warning—"

"The Almighty will take care of us."

Another half hour brought us to our own farm and house. The house was little more than a shack, not much above the level of the houses of comic-strip hillbillies. Furnishings were minimal, save that a shelf along one wall bore a surprising lot of books. This must be what Bradford had meant when he spoke of Philip Shirlaw's being learned above his station.

Since William did not fix his eyes on this shelf for more than a few seconds at a time, I could not tell much about Philip's choice of books. I caught a glimpse of several volumes of sermons by John Wesley and George Whitefield. There were also, I think, a Bible, a Shakespeare, and a Plutarch.

Philip Shirlaw climbed up into the loft and came down with a pair of small crossbows. I was astonished, supposing these medieval weapons to have been long obsolete. I later learned that they were used for poaching as late as the time of our adventure, being favored for their silence.

William unhappily tried again to dissuade his sire: "Don't let thy grudge against Zir Roger lead thee into risking our necks. Colonel Armitage's vootman, Jemmy Thome, hath told me 'tis a hanging offence to 'trespass with intent to kill rabbits.' Them are the words o' the statute."

I followed the argument with growing apprehension. What would happen

to me if William were killed while I shared his body?

But Philip Shirlaw was not to be swayed. "Pooh! Put thy trust in Providence, zon, and vear noft. Nor do I, as a good Christian, bear Zir Roger a grudge. I do but take my vair share o' the vruits o' the earth, which God hath provided for all mankind. Zee the ninth chapter o' Genesis."

The steel crossbow bolts were about the size of a modern pencil. With a pocket full of these and a crossbow under his arm, William set out behind his father.

They scouted the woods between the Stanwyck estate and the Shirlaw farm, seeing and hearing none. The sun sank lower and disappeared behind the clouds, which thickened with a promise of rain.

As Philip had surmised, all the service personnel of Stanwyck House had gone to the mansion to wait upon the master and his guests.

At last—it must have been nearly six—we roused a rabbit, which went hippety-hoppity through the big old oaks. William made a quick motion, but Philip stayed him with a gesture. Carefully, they cocked their weapons, placed their bolts in the grooves, and scouted forward.

They raised the rabbit again, but again it bolted before they got within range. Being old hands at this, they spread out and continued their stalk.

The woods thinned, and they reached the edge of the outer lawns, not far from the ha-ha. In the depression that ran along the foot of the ha-ha sat their rabbit, nibbling.

Philip's crossbow twanged. The quarrel whined. The rabbit tumbled over.

"Got un!" said William.

The Shirlaws ran out from the wood to seize the game, when a bellow halted them. Atop the ha-ha stood Sir Roger Stanwyck and his son Charles. Sir Roger held a musket trained upon them; Charles, a pistol.

"Ha!" roared Sir Roger. "Said I not I'd have you? The divil set upon me if I don't see you twain dangling from the hempseed caudle!"

"O Gemini, they mean it!" muttered William. "Get ready to vlee!"

"Drop those crossbows!" came the high voice of Charles Stanwyck.

William's bow was still cocked and loaded. Without thinking, the young man whipped up the weapon and discharged it at Sir Roger. He missed, and the whistle of the bolt was drowned by the roar of the musket. I heard the ball strike Philip, who fell backwards with a piercing scream. William dropped his crossbow and ran for the woods.

Another flash lit up the evening landscape. The report came to William's ears just as a terrific blow struck him in the back . . .

And then I was back in Madame Nosi's room, on my feet but staggering back from the wall. About the floor lay the shattered remains of Balsamo's mirror. To my left lay my friend. Madame Nosi was not to be seen, but I had a dim memory of terrible shrieks and crashes just before my "awakening."

I dashed to the head of the stair. At the foot, in an unlovely sprawl, lay Madame Nosi.

After a second's hesitation, I went back to the room. My friend was sitting up on the floor, mumbling: "Wha—what hath happened? I thought I was shot . . ."

"Come, help me!" I said. We descended to Madame Nosi.

"Pull her up," said my friend. "It's not decent for her to be lying upside down like that."

"Don't touch her!" I said. "Shouldn't move an injured person until the doctor comes." I felt for her pulse but found none.

A policeman appeared, followed by a couple of neighbors. The cop asked: "What goes on? What's the screaming and crashing—oh!" He sighted Fatima Nosi.

In due course, the ambulance came and took Madame Nosi. For the next few days, my friend and I spent hours answering questions by the coroner and other officials.

As nearly as we could reconstruct the events, my friend and I had leaped out of our chairs at the moment when, in our eighteenth-century lives, we were shot by the Stanwycks. I had blundered into the wall and broken the mirror. Whether in sudden panic at the success of her spell, or for some other reason, Madame Nosi had run out of the room. She had died, not from the effects of the fall, as we at first supposed, but from heart failure before she fell. Her physician testified that she had suffered from heart disease.

The officials, although puzzled and suspicious, let us go. They swept up the fragments of Balsamo's mirror for "evidence," but I never could find out what became of the pieces. I had some vague idea of putting them together but let it go in the rush of cramming for spring finals. I suppose the pieces were thrown out with the trash.

When it was over, my friend sighed and said: "I fear me that the eighteenth century, which I have idealized all these years, never really existed. The real one was far dirtier, more narrow-minded, brutal, orthodox, and superstitious than I could have ever conceived without seeing it. Gawd, to be cooped up in the body of a bewhiskered amateur theologian and not be able to say a word to controvert his fallacies! The eighteenth century I visualized was a mere artifact—a product of my imagination, compounded of pictures in books which I saw as a child, things I had read, and bits of Colonial architecture I've seen."

"Then," I asked, "you'll settle down and be reconciled to your own twentieth century?"

"Good heavens, no! Our experience—assuming it to be genuine and not a mere hallucination—only serves to convince me that the real world, anywhere or in any age, is no place for a gentleman of sensitivity. So I shall spend more

time in the world of dreams. If you like, Willy, I shall be glad to meet you there. There's a palace of lapis lazuli I must show you, atop a mountain of glass . . ."

Time

I like to think that certain bygone men
And I, could we have breached the glassy wall
That sunders Now from Then, we could have all
Been friends, shared drinks and thoughts, and then,

Enlarged in mind, each one have gone his way:
Like scoffing Lucian, merry Franklin, Lord
Dunsany, and Descartes with clanking sword;
Intrepid Burton, from some tropic fray;

Demokritos, Bob Howard, caustic Twain.
The wall is thick. These bubbles known as men,
When once they burst, cannot be blown again.
I wonder, as time's flood sweeps on amain,

Will any man, when I have reached my end,
Wish likewise that he could have been my friend?

Aristotle and the Gun

From:

Sherman Weaver, Librarian
The Palace
Paumanok, Sewanhaki
Sachimate of Lenape
Flower Moon 3, 3097

To:

Messire Markos Koukidas
Consulate of the Balkan Commonwealth
Kataapa, Mushogian Federation

My dear Consul:

You have no doubt heard of our glorious victory at Ptaksit, when our noble Sachim destroyed the armored chivalry of the Mengwe by the brilliant use of pikemen and archery. (I suggested it to him years ago, but never mind.) Sagoyewatha and most of his Senecas fell, and the Oneidas broke before our countercharge. The envoys from the Grand Council of the Long House arrive tomorrow for a peace-pauwau. The roads to the South are open again, so I send you my long-promised account of the events that brought me from my own world into this one.

If you could have stayed longer on your last visit, I think I could have made the matter clearer, despite the language difficulty and my hardness of hearing. But perhaps, if I give you a simple narrative, in the order in which things happened to me, truth will transpire.

Know, then, that I was born into a world that looks like this one on the map, but is very different as regards human affairs. I tried to tell you some of the triumphs of our natural philosophers, of our machines and discoveries. No doubt you thought me a first-class liar, though you were too polite to say so.

Nonetheless, my tale is true, though for reasons that will appear I cannot prove it. I was one of those natural philosophers. I commanded a group of younger philosophers, engaged in a task called a *project*, at a center of learning named Brookhaven, on the south shore of Sewanhaki twenty parasangs east of Paumanok. Paumanok itself was known as Brooklyn, and formed part of an even larger city called New York.

My project had to do with the study of space-time. (Never mind what that means but read on.) At this center we had learned to get vast amounts of power from sea water by what we called a fusion process. By this process we could concentrate so much power in a small space that we could warp the entity called space-time and cause things to travel in time as our other machines traveled in space.

When our calculations showed that we could theoretically hurl an object back in time, we began to build a machine for testing this hypothesis. First we built a small pilot model. In this we sent small objects back in time for short periods.

We began with inanimate objects. Then we found that a rabbit or rat could also be projected without harm. The time-translation would not be permanent; rather, it acted like one of these rubber balls the Hesperians play games with. The object would stay in the desired time for a period determined by the power used to project it and its own mass, and would then return spontaneously to the time and place from which it started.

We had reported our progress regularly, but my chief had other matters on his mind and did not read our reports for many months. When he got a report saying that we were completing a machine to hurl human beings back in time, however, he awoke to what was going on, read our previous reports, and called me in.

"Sherm," he said, "I've been discussing this project with Washington, and I'm afraid they take a dim view of it."

"Why?" said I, astonished.

"Two reasons. For one thing, they think you've gone off the reservation. They're much more interested in the Antarctic Reclamation Project and want to concentrate all our appropriations and brain power on it.

"For another, they're frankly scared of this time machine of yours. Suppose you went back, say, to the time of Alexander the Great and shot Alexander before he got started? That would change all later history, and we'd go out like candles."

"Ridiculous," I said.

"What, what *would* happen?"

"Our equations are not conclusive, but there are several possibilities. As you will see if you read Report No.9, it depends on whether space-time has a positive or negative curvature. If positive, any disturbance in the past tends to be ironed out in subsequent history, so that things become more and more nearly identical with what they would have been anyway. If negative, then events will diverge more and more from their original pattern with time.

"Now, as I showed in this report, the chances are overwhelmingly in favor of a positive curvature. However, we intend to take every precaution and make our first tests for short periods, with a minimum—"

"That's enough," said my superior, holding up a hand.

"It's very interesting, but the decision has already been made."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean Project A-257 is to be closed down and a final report written at once. The machines are to be dismantled, and the group will be put to work on another project."

"What?" I shouted. "But you can't stop us just when we're on the verge—"

"I'm sorry, Sherm, but I can. That's what the ABC decided at yesterday's meeting. It hasn't been officially announced, but they gave me positive orders to kill the project as soon as I got back here."

"Of all the lousy, arbitrary, benighted—"

"I know how you feel, but I have no choice."

I lost my temper and defied him, threatening to go ahead with the project anyway. It was ridiculous, because he could easily dismiss me for insubordination. However, I knew he valued my ability and counted on his wanting to keep me for that reason. But he was clever enough to have his cake and eat it.

"If that's how you feel," he said, "the section is abolished here and now. Your group will be broken up and assigned to other projects. You'll be kept on at your present rating with the title of consultant. Then when you're willing to talk sense, perhaps we can find you a suitable job."

I stamped out of his office and went home to brood. I ought now to tell you something of myself. I am old enough to be objective, I hope. And, as I have but a few years left, there is no point in pretence.

I have always been a solitary, misanthropic man. I had little interest in or liking of my fellow man, who naturally paid me back in the same coin. I was awkward and ill at ease in company. I had a genius for saying the wrong thing and making a fool of myself.

I never understood people. Even when I watched and planned my own actions with the greatest care, I never could tell how others would react to them. To me men were and are an unpredictable, irrational, and dangerous species of hairless ape. While I could avoid some of my worst gaffes by keeping my own counsel and watching my every word, they did not like that

either. They considered me a cold, stiff, unfriendly sort of person when I was only trying to be polite and avoid offending them.

I never married. At the time of which I speak, I was verging on middle age without a single close friend and no more acquaintances than my professional work required.

My only interest, outside my work, was a hobby of the history of science. Unlike most of my fellow philosophers, I was historically minded, with a good smattering of a classical education. I belonged to the History of Science Society and wrote papers on the history of science for its periodical *Isis*.

I went back to my little rented house, feeling like Galileo. He was a scientist persecuted for his astronomical theories by the religious authorities of my world several centuries before my time, as Georg Schwartzhorn was a few years ago in this world's Europe.

I felt I had been born too soon. If only the world were scientifically more advanced, my genius would be appreciated and my personal difficulties solved.

Well, I thought, why is the world not scientifically more advanced? I reviewed the early growth of science. Why had not your fellow countrymen, when they made a start towards a scientific age two thousand to twenty-five hundred years ago, kept at it until they made science the self-supporting, self-accelerating thing it at last became-in my world, that is?

I knew the answers that historians of science had worked out. One was the effect of slavery, which made work disgraceful to a free man and therefore made experiment and invention unattractive because they looked like work. Another was the primitive state of the mechanical arts: things like making clear glass and accurate measuring devices. Another was the Hellenes' fondness for spinning cosmic theories without enough facts to go on, the result of which was that most of their theories were wildly wrong.

Well, thought I, could a man go back to this period and, by applying a stimulus at the right time and place, give the necessary push to set the whole trend rolling off in the right direction?

People had written fantastic stories about a man's going back in time and overawing the natives by a display of the discoveries of his own later era. More often than not, such a time-traveling hero came to a bad end. The people of the earlier time killed him as a witch, or he met with an accident, or something happened to keep him from changing history. But, knowing these dangers, I could forestall them by careful planning.

It would do little or no good to take back some major invention, like a printing press or an automobile, and turn it over to the ancients in the hope of grafting it on their culture. I could not teach them to work it in a reasonable time; and, if it broke down or ran out of supplies, there would be no way to get it running again.

What I had to do was to find a key mind and implant in it an appreciation

of sound scientific method. He would have to be somebody who would have been important in any event, or I could not count on his influence's spreading far and wide.

After study of Sarton and other historians of science, I picked Aristotle. You have heard of him, have you not? He existed in your world just as he did in mine. In fact, up to Aristotle's time our worlds were one and the same.

Aristotle was one of the greatest minds of all time. In my world, he was the first encyclopedist; the first man who tried to know everything, write down everything, and explain everything. He did much good original scientific work, too, mostly in biology.

However, Aristotle tried to cover so much ground, and accepted so many fables as facts, that he did much harm to science as well as good. For, when a man of such colossal intellect goes wrong, he carries with him whole generations of weaker minds who cite him as an infallible authority. Like his colleagues, Aristotle never appreciated the need for constant verification. Thus, though he was married twice, he said that men have more teeth than women. He never thought to ask either of his wives to open her mouth for a count. He never grasped the need for invention and experiment.

Now, if I could catch Aristotle at the right period of his career, perhaps I could give him a push in the right direction.

When would that be? Normally, one would take him as a young man. But Aristotle's entire youth, from seventeen to thirty-seven, was spent in Athens listening to Plato's lectures. I did not wish to compete with Plato, an overpowering personality who could argue rings around anybody. His viewpoint was mystical and anti-scientific, the very thing I wanted to steer Aristotle away from. Many of Aristotle's intellectual vices can be traced back to Plato's influence.

I did not think it wise to present myself in Athens either during Aristotle's early period, when he was a student under Plato, or later, when he headed his own school. I could not pass myself off as a Hellene, and the Hellenes of that time had a contempt for all non-Hellenes, who they called "barbarians." Aristotle was one of the worst offenders in this respect. Of course this is a universal human failing, but it was particularly virulent among Athenian intellectuals. In his later Athenian period, too, Aristotle's ideas would probably be too set with age to change.

I concluded that my best chance would be to catch Aristotle while he was tutoring young Alexander the Great at the court of Philip the Second of Macedon. He would have regarded Macedon as a backward country, even though the court spoke Attic Greek. Perhaps he would be bored with bluff Macedonian stag-hunting squires and lonesome for intellectual company. As he would regard the Macedonians as the next thing to *barbaroi,* another barbarian would not appear at such a disadvantage there as at Athens.

Of course, whatever I accomplished with Aristotle, the results would depend on the curvature of space-time. I had not been wholly frank with my superior. While the equations tended to favor the hypothesis of a positive curvature, the probability was not overwhelming as I claimed. Perhaps my efforts would have little effect on history, or perhaps the effect would grow and widen like ripples in a pool. In the latter case the existing world would, as my superior said, be snuffed out.

Well, at that moment I hated the existing world and would not give a snap of my fingers for its destruction. I was going to create a much better one and come back from ancient, times to enjoy it.

Our previous experiments showed that I could project myself back to ancient Macedon with an accuracy of about two months temporally and a half-parasang spatially. The machine included controls for positioning the time traveler anywhere on the globe, and safety devices for locating him above the surface of the earth, not in a place already occupied by a solid object. The equations showed that I should stay in Macedon about nine weeks before being snapped back to the present.

Once I had made up my mind, I worked as fast as I could. I telephoned my superior (you remember what a telephone is?) and made my peace. I said:

"I know I was a damned fool, Fred, but this thing was my baby; my one chance to be a great and famous scientist. I might have got a Nobel prize out of it."

"Sure, I know, Sherm," he said. "When are you coming back to the lab?"

"Well—uh—what about my group?"

"I held up the papers on that, in case you might change your mind. So if you come back, all will go on organization-wise as before."

"You want that final report on A-257, don't you?" I said, trying to keep my voice level.

"Sure."

"Then don't let the mechanics start to dismantle the machines until I've written the report."

"No; I've had the place locked up since yesterday."

"Okay. I want to shut myself in with the apparatus and the data sheets for a while and bat out the report without being bothered."

"That'll be fine," he said.

My first step in getting ready for my journey was to buy a suit of classical traveler's clothing from a theatrical costume company. This comprised a knee-length pull-over tunic or chiton, a short horseman's cloak or chlamys, knitted buskins, sandals, a broad-brimmed black felt hat, and a staff. I stopped shaving, though I did not have time to raise a respectable beard.

My auxiliary equipment included a purse of coinage of the time, mostly golden Macedonian staters. Some of these coins were genuine, bought from a

numismatic supply house, but most were copies I cast myself in the laboratory at night. I made sure of being rich enough to live decently for longer than my nine weeks' stay. This was not hard, as the purchasing power of precious metals was more than fifty times greater in the classical world than in mine.

I wore the purse attached to a heavy belt next to my skin. From this belt also hung a missile-weapon called a *gun,* which I have told you about. This was a small gun, called a pistol or revolver. I did not mean to shoot anybody, or expose the gun at all if I could help it. It was there as a last resort.

I also took several small devices of our science to impress Aristotle: a pocket microscope and a magnifying glass, a small telescope, a compass, my timepiece, a flashlight, a small camera, and some medicines. I intended to show these things to people of ancient times only with the greatest caution. By the time I had slung all these objects in their pouches and cases from my belt, I had a heavy load. Another belt over the tunic supported a small purse for day-to-day buying and an all-purpose knife.

I already had a good reading knowledge of classical Greek, which I tried to polish by practice with the spoken language and listening to it on my talking machine. I knew I should arrive speaking with an accent, for we had no way of knowing exactly what Attic Greek sounded like.

I decided, therefore, to pass myself off as a traveler from India. Nobody would believe I was a Hellene. If I said I came from the north or west, no Hellene would listen to me, as they regarded Europeans as warlike but half-witted savages. If I said I was from some well-known civilized country like Carthage, Egypt, Babylonia, or Persia, I should be in danger of meeting someone who knew those countries and of being exposed as a fraud.

To tell the truth of my origin, save under extraordinary circumstances, would be most imprudent. It would lead to my being considered a lunatic or a liar, as I can guess that your good self has more than once suspected me of being.

An Indian, however, should be acceptable. At this time, the Hellenes knew about that land only a few wild rumors and the account of Ktesias of Knidos, who made a book of the tales he picked up about India at the Persian court. The Hellenes had heard that India harbored philosophers. Therefore, thinking Greeks might be willing to consider Indians as almost as civilized as themselves.

What should I call myself? I took a common Indian name, Chandra, and Hellenized it to Zandras. That, I knew, was what the Hellenes would do anyway, as they had no "tch" sound and insisted on putting Greek inflectional endings on foreign names. I would not try to use my own name, which is not even remotely Greek or Indian-sounding. (Some day I must explain the blunders in my world that led to Hesperians' being called "Indians.")

The newness and cleanliness of my costume bothered me. It did not look worn, and I could hardly break it in around Brookhaven without attracting

attention. I decided that if the question came up, I should say: yes, I bought it when I entered Greece, so as not to be conspicuous in my native garb.

During the day, when not scouring New York for equipment, I was locked in the room with the machine. While my colleagues thought I was either writing my report or dismantling the apparatus, I was getting ready for my trip.

Two weeks went by thus. One day a memorandum came down from my superior, saying: "How is that final report coming?"

I knew then I had better put my plan into execution at once. I sent back a memorandum: "Almost ready for the writing machine."

That night I came back to the laboratory. As I had been doing this often, the guards took no notice. I went to the time-machine room, locked the door from the inside, and got out my equipment and costume.

I adjusted the machine to set me down near Pella, the capital of Macedon, in the spring of the year 340 before Christ in our system of reckoning (976 Algonkian). I set the autoactuator, climbed inside, and closed the door.

The feeling of being projected through time cannot really be described. There is a sharp pain, agonizing but too short to let the victim even cry out. At the same time there is the feeling of terrific acceleration, as if one were being shot from a catapult, but in no particular direction.

Then the seat in the passenger compartment dropped away from under me. There was a crunch, and a lot of sharp things jabbed me. I had fallen into the top of a tree.

I grabbed a couple of branches to save myself. The mechanism that positioned me in Macedon, detecting solid matter at the point where I was going to materialize, had raised me up above the treetops and then let go. It was an old oak, just putting out its spring leaves.

In clutching for branches I dropped my staff, which slithered down through the foliage and thumped the ground below. At least it thumped something. There was a startled yell.

Classical costume is impractical for tree-climbing. Branches kept knocking off my hat, or snagging my cloak, or poking me in tender places not protected by trousers. I ended my climb with a slide and a fall of several feet, tumbling into the dirt.

As I looked up, the first thing I saw was a burly, blackbearded man in a dirty tunic, standing with a knife in his hand. Near him stood a pair of oxen yoked to a wooden plow. At his feet rested a water jug.

The plowman had evidently finished a furrow and lain down to rest himself and his beasts when the fall of my staff on him and then my arrival in person aroused him.

Around me stretched the broad Emathian Plain, ringed by ranges of stony hills and craggy mountains. As the sky was overcast, and I did not dare con-

sult my compass, I had no sure way of orienting myself, or even telling what time of day it was. I assumed that the biggest mountain in sight was Mount Bermion, which ought to be to the west. To the north I could see a trace of water. This would be Lake Loudias. Beyond the lake rose a range of low hills. A discoloration on the nearest spur of these hills might be a city, though my sight was not keen enough to make out details, and I had to do without my eyeglasses. The gently rolling plain was cut up into fields and pastures with occasional trees and patches of marsh. Dry brown grasses left over from winter nodded in the wind.

My realization of all this took but a flash. Then my attention was brought back to the plowman, who spoke.

I could not understand a word. But then, he would speak Macedonian. Though this can be deemed a Greek dialect, it differed so from Attic Greek as to be unintelligible.

No doubt the man wanted to know what I was doing in his tree. I put on my best smile and said in my slow fumbling Attic: "Rejoice! I am lost, and climbed your tree to find my way."

He spoke again. When I did not respond, he repeated his words more loudly, waving his knife.

We exchanged more words and gestures, but it was evident that neither had the faintest notion of what the other was trying to say. The plowman began shouting, as ignorant people will when faced by the linguistic barrier.

At last I pointed to the distant headland overlooking the lake, on which there appeared a discoloration that might be the city. Slowly and carefully I said:

"Is that Pella?"

"Nai, Pella!" The man's mien became less threatening.

"I am going to Pella. Where can I find the philosopher Aristoteles?" I repeated the name.

He was off again with more gibberish, but I gathered from his expression that he had never heard of any Aristoteles. So, I picked up my hat and stick, felt through my tunic to make sure my gear was all in place, tossed the rustic a final *"Chaire!"* and set off.

By the time I had crossed the muddy field and come out on a cart track, the problem of looking like a seasoned traveler had solved itself. There were green and brown stains on my clothes from the scramble down the tree; the cloak was torn; the branches had scratched my limbs and face; my feet and lower legs were covered with mud. I also became aware that, to one who has lived all his life with his loins decently swathed in trousers and underdrawers, classical costume is excessively drafty.

I glanced back to see the plowman still standing with one hand on his plow, looking at me in puzzled fashion. The poor fellow had never been able to decide what, if anything, to do about me.

When I found a road, it was hardly more than a heavily used cart track, with a pair of deep ruts and the space between them alternating stones, mud, and long grass.

I walked towards the lake and passed a few people on the road. To one used to the teeming traffic of my world, Macedon seemed dead and deserted. I spoke to some of the people, but ran into the same barrier of language as with the plowman.

Finally a two-horse chariot came along, driven by a stout man wearing a headband, a kind of kilt, and high-laced boots. He pulled up at my hail.

"What is it?" he said, in Attic not much better than mine. "I seek the philosopher, Aristoteles of Stageira. Where can I find him?"

"He lives in Mieza."

"Where is that?"

The man waved. "You are going the wrong way. Follow this road back the way you came. At the ford across the Bottiais, take the right-hand fork, which will bring you to Mieza and Kition. Do you understand?"

"I think so," I said. "How far is it?"

"About two hundred stadia."

My heart sank to my sandals. This meant five parasangs, or a good two-days' walk. I thought of trying to buy a horse or a chariot, but I had never ridden or driven a horse and saw no prospect of learning how soon enough to do any good. I had read about Mieza as Aristotle's home in Macedon but, as none of my maps had shown it, I had assumed it to be a suburb of Pella.

I thanked the man, who trotted off, and set out after him. The details of my journey need not detain you. I was benighted far from shelter through not knowing where the villages were, attacked by watchdogs, eaten alive by mosquitoes, and invaded by vermin when I did find a place to sleep the second night. The road skirted the huge marshes that spread over the Emathian Plain west of Lake Loudias. Several small streams came down from Mount Bermion and lost themselves in this marsh.

At last I neared Mieza, which stands on one of the spurs of Mount Bermion. I was trudging wearily up the long rise to the village when six youths on little Greek horses clattered down the road. I stepped to one side, but instead of cantering past they pulled up and faced me in a semicircle.

"Who are you?" asked one, a smallish youth of about fifteen, in fluent Attic. He was blond and would have been noticeably handsome without his pimples.

"I am Zandras of Pataliputra," I said, giving the ancient name for Patna on the Ganges. "I seek the philosopher Aristoteles."

"Oh, a barbarian!" cried Pimples. "We know what the Aristoteles thinks of these, eh, boys?"

The others joined in, shouting noncompliments and bragging about all the barbarians they would some day kill or enslave.

I made the mistake of letting them see I was getting angry.

I knew it was unwise, but I could not help myself. "If you do not wish to help me, then let me pass," I said.

"Not only a barbarian, but an insolent one!" cried one of the group, making his horse dance uncomfortably close to me.

"Stand aside, children!" I demanded.

"We must teach you a lesson," said Pimples. The others giggled.

"You had better let me alone," I said, gripping my staff in both hands.

A tall handsome adolescent reached over and knocked my hat off: "That for you, cowardly Asiatic!" he yelled.

Without stopping to think, I shouted an English epithet and swung my staff. Either the young man leaned out of my way or his horse shied, for my blow missed him. The momentum carried the staff past my target and the end struck the nose of one of the other horses.

The pony squealed and reared. Having no stirrups, the rider slid off the animal's rump into the dirt. The horse galloped off.

All six youths began screaming. The blond one, who had a particularly piercing voice, mouthed some threat. The next thing I knew, his horse bounded directly at me. Before I could dodge, the animal's shoulder knocked me head over heels and the beast leaped over me as I rolled. Luckily, horses' dislike of stepping on anything squashy saved me from being trampled.

I scrambled up as another horse bore down upon me. By a frantic leap, I got out of its way, but I saw that the other boys were jockeying their mounts to do likewise.

A few paces away rose a big pine. I dodged in among its lower branches as the other horses ran at me. The youths could not force their mounts in among these branches, so they galloped round and round and yelled. Most of their talk I could not understand, but I caught a sentence from Pimples:

"Ptolemaios! Ride back to the house and fetch bows or javelins!"

Hooves receded. While I could not see clearly through the pine-needles, I inferred what was happening. The youths would not try to rush me on foot, first because they liked being on horseback, and if they dismounted they might lose their horses or have trouble remounting; second, because, as long as I kept my back to the tree, they would have a hard time getting at me through the tangle of branches, and I could hit and poke them with my stick as they came. Though not an unusually tall man in my own world, I was much bigger than any of these boys.

This, however, was a minor consideration. I recognized the name "Ptolemaios" as that of one of Alexander's companions, who in my world became King Ptolemy of Egypt and founded a famous dynasty. Young Pimples, then, must be Alexander himself.

I was in a real predicament. If I stayed where I was, Ptolemaios would

bring back missiles for target practice with me as the target. I could of course shoot some of the boys with my gun, which would save me for the time being. But, in an absolute monarchy, killing the crown prince's friends, let alone the crown prince himself, is no way to achieve a peaceful old age, regardless of the provocation.

While I was thinking of these matters and listening to my attackers, a stone swished through the branches and bounced off the trunk. The small dark youth who had fallen off his horse had thrown the rock and was urging his friends to do likewise. I caught glimpses of Pimples and the rest dismounting and scurrying around for stones, a commodity with which Greece and Macedon are notoriously well supplied.

More stones came through the needles, caroming from the branches. One the size of my fist struck me lightly in the shin.

The boys came closer so that their aim got better. I wormed my way around the trunk to put it between me and them, but they saw the movement and spread out around the tree. A stone grazed my scalp, dizzying me and drawing blood. I thought of climbing, but, as the tree became more slender with height, I should be more exposed the higher I got. I should also be less able to dodge while perched in the branches.

That is how things stood when I heard hoofbeats again. This is the moment of decision, I thought. Ptolemaios is coming back with missile weapons. If I used my gun, I might doom myself in the long run, but it would be ridiculous to stand there and let them riddle me while I had an unused weapon.

I fumbled under my tunic and unsnapped the safety strap that kept the pistol in its holster. I pulled the weapon out and checked its projectiles.

A deep voice broke into the bickering. I caught phrases: ". . . insulting an unoffending traveler . . . how know you he is not a prince in his own country? . . . the king shall hear of this . . . like newly-freed slaves, not like princes and gentlemen . . ."

I pushed towards the outer limits of the screen of pine needles. A heavy-set, brown-bearded man on a horse was haranguing the youths, who had dropped their stones. Pimples said:

"We were only having a little sport."

I stepped out from the branches, walked over to where my battered hat lay, and put it on. Then I said to the newcomer: "Rejoice! I am glad you came before your boys' play got too rough." I grinned, determined to act cheerful if it killed me. Only iron self-control would get me through this difficulty.

The man grunted. "Who are you?"

"Zandras of Pataliputra, a city in India. I seek Aristoteles the philosopher."

"He insulted us –" began one of the youths, but Brownbeard ignored him. He said:

"I am sorry you have had so rude an introduction to our royal house. This

mass of youthful insolence" (he indicated Pimples) "is the Alexandros Philippou, heir to the throne of Makedonia." He introduced the others: Hephaistion, who had knocked my hat off and was now holding the others' horses; Nearchos, who had lost his horse; Ptolemaios, who had gone for weapons; and Harpalos and Philotas. He continued:

"When the Ptolemaios dashed into the house, I inquired the reason for his haste, learned of their quarrel with you, and came out forthwith. They have misapplied their master's teachings. They should not behave thus even to a barbarian like yourself, for in so doing they lower themselves to the barbarian's level. I am returning to the house of Aristoteles. You may follow."

The man turned his horse and started walking it back towards Mieza. The six boys busied themselves with catching Nearchos' horse.

I walked after him, though I had to dog-trot now and then to keep up. As it was uphill, I was soon breathing hard. I panted:

"Who—my lord—are you?"

The man's beard came round and he raised an eyebrow. "I thought you would know. I am Antipatros, regent of Makedonia."

Before we reached the village proper, Antipatros turned off through a kind of park, with statues and benches. This, I supposed, was the Precinct of the Nymphs, which Aristotle used as a school ground. We went through the park and stopped at a mansion on the other side. Antipatros tossed the reins to a groom and slid off his horse.

"Aristoteles!" roared Antipatros. "A man wishes to see you."

A man of about my own age—the early forties—came out. He was of medium height and slender build, with a thin-lipped, severe-looking face and a pepper-and-salt beard cut short. He was wrapped in a billowing himation or large cloak, with a colorful scroll-patterned border. He wore golden rings on several fingers.

Antipatros made a fumbling introduction: "Old fellow, this is—ah—what's-his-name from—ah—some place in India." He told of rescuing me from Alexander and his fellow delinquents, adding: "If you do not beat some manners into your pack of cubs soon, it will be too late."

Aristotle looked at me sharply and lisped: "It ith always a pleasure to meet men from afar. What brings you here, my friend?"

I gave my name and said: "Being accounted something of a philosopher in my own land, I thought my visit to the West would be incomplete without speaking to the greatest Western philosopher. And when I asked who he was, everyone told me to seek out Aristoteles Nikomachou."

Aristotle purred. "It is good of them to thay tho. Ahem. Come in and join me in a drop of wine. Can you tell me of the wonders of India?"

"Yes indeed, but you must tell me in turn of your discoveries, which to me are much more wonderful."

"Come, come, then. Perhaps you could stay over a few days. I shall have many, many things to athk you."

That is how I met Aristotle. He and I hit it off, as we said in my world, from the start. We had much in common. Some people would not like Aristotle's lisp, or his fussy, pedantic ways, or his fondness for worrying any topic of conversation to death. But he and I got along fine.

That afternoon, in the house that King Philip had built for Aristotle to use as the royal school, he handed me a cup of wine flavored with turpentine and asked:

"Tell me about the elephant, that great beast we have heard of with a tail at both ends. Does it truly exist?"

"Indeed it does," I said, and went on to tell what I knew of elephants, while Aristotle scribbled notes on a piece of papyrus.

"What do they call the elephant in India?" he asked.

The question caught me by surprise, for it had never occurred to me to learn ancient Hindustani along with all the other things I had to know for this expedition. I sipped the wine to give me time to think. I have never cared for alcoholic liquors, and this stuff tasted awful to me. But, for the sake of my objective, I had to pretend to like it. No doubt I should have to make up some kind of gibberish—but then a mental broad-jump carried me back to the stories of Kipling I had read as a boy.

"We call it a *hathi,*" I said. "Though of course there are many languages in India."

"How about that Indian wild ath of which Ktesias thpeakth, with a horn in the middle of its forehead?"

"You had better call it a nose-horn *(rhinokeros)* for that is where its horn really is, and it is more like a gigantic pig than an ass . . ."

As dinner-time neared, I made some artful remarks about going out to find accommodations in Mieza, but Aristotle (to my joy) would have none of it. I should stay right there at the school; my polite protestations of unworthiness he waved aside.

"You mutht plan to stop here for months," he said. "I shall never, never have such a chance to collect data on India again. Do not worry about expense; the king pays all. You are—ahem—the first barbarian I have known with a decent intellect, and I get lonethome for good tholid talk. Theaphrastos has gone to Athens, and my other friends come to these back-lands but seldom."

"How about the Macedonians?"

"Aiboi! Thome like my friend Antipatros are good fellows, but most are as lackwitted as a Persian grandee. And now tell me of Patal—what is your city's name?"

Presently Alexander and his friends came in. They seemed taken aback at seeing me closeted with their master. I put on a brisk smile and said: "Rejoice, my friends!" as if nothing untoward had happened. The boys glowered and whispered among themselves, but did not attempt any more disturbance at that time.

When they gathered for their lecture next morning, Aristotle told them: "I am too busy with the gentleman from India to waste time pounding unwanted wisdom into your miserable little thouls. Go shoot some rabbits or catch some fish for dinner, but in any case begone!"

The boys grinned. Alexander said: "It seems the barbarian has his uses after all. I hope you stay with us forever, good barbarian!"

After they had gone, Antipatros came in to say good-bye to Aristotle. He asked me with gruff good will how I was doing and went out to ride back to Pella.

The weeks passed unnoticed and the flowers of spring came out while I visited Aristotle. Day after day we strolled about the Precinct of the Nymphs, talking, or sat indoors when it rained. Sometimes the boys followed us, listening; at other times we talked alone. They played a couple of practical jokes on me, but, by pretending to be amused when I was really furious, I avoided serious trouble with them.

I learned that Aristotle had a wife and a little daughter in another part of the big house, but he never let me meet the lady. I only caught glimpses of them from a distance.

I carefully shifted the subject of our daily discourse from the marvels of India to the more basic questions of science. We argued over the nature of matter and the shape of the solar system. I gave out that the Indians were well on the road to the modem concepts—modern in my world, that is, of astronomy, physics, and so forth. I told of the discoveries of those eminent Pataliputran philosophers: Kopernikos in astronomy, Neuton in physics, Darben in evolution, and Mendeles in genetics. (I forgot; these names mean nothing to you, though an educated man of my world would recognize them at once through their Greek disguise.)

Always I stressed *method:* the need for experiment and invention and for checking each theory back against the facts. Though an opinionated and argumentative man, Aristotle had a mind like a sponge, eagerly absorbing any new fact, surmise, or opinion, whether he agreed with it or not.

I tried to find a workable compromise between what I knew science could do on one hand and the limits of Aristotle's credulity on the other. Therefore I said nothing about flying machines, guns, buildings a thousand feet high, and other technical wonders of my world. Nevertheless, I caught Aristotle looking at me sharply out of those small black eyes one day.

"Do you doubt me, Aristoteles?" I said.

"N-no, no," he said thoughtfully. "But it does theem to me that, were your Indian inventors as wonderful as you make out, they would have fabricated you wings like those of Daidalos in the legend. Then you could have flown to Makedonia directly, without the trials of crossing Persia by camel."

"That has been tried, but men's muscles do not have enough strength in proportion to their weight."

"Ahem. Did you bring anything from India to show the skills of your people?"

I grinned, for I had been hoping for such a question. "I did fetch a few small devices," said I, reaching into my tunic and bringing out the magnifying glass. I demonstrated its use.

Aristotle shook his head. "Why did you not show me this before? It would have quieted my doubts."

"People have met with misfortune by trying too suddenly to change the ideas of those around them. Like your teacher's teacher, Sokrates."

"That is true, true. What other devices did you bring?"

I had intended to show my devices at intervals, gradually, but Aristotle was so insistent on seeing them all that I gave in to him before he got angry. The little telescope was not powerful enough to show the moons of Jupiter or the rings of Saturn, but it showed enough to convince Aristotle of its power. If he could not see these astronomical phenomena himself, he was almost willing to take my word that they could be seen with the larger telescopes we had in India.

One day a light-armed soldier galloped up to us in the midst of our discussions in the Precinct of Nymphs. Ignoring the rest of us, the fellow said to Alexander: "Hail, O Prince! The king, your father, will be here before sunset."

Everybody rushed around cleaning up the place. We were all lined up in front of the big house when King Philip and his entourage arrived on horseback with a jingle and a clatter, in crested helmets and flowing mantles. I knew Philip by his one eye. He was a big powerful man, much scarred, with a thick curly black beard going gray. He dismounted, embraced his son, gave Aristotle a brief greeting, and said to Alexander:

"How would you like to attend a siege?" Alexander whooped.

"Thrace is subdued," said the king, "but Byzantion and Perinthos have declared against me, thanks to Athenian intrigue. I shall give the Perintheans something to think about besides the bribes of the Great King. It is time you smelled blood, youngster; would you like to come?"

"Yes, yes! Can my friends come too?"

"If they like and their fathers let them."

"O King!" said Aristotle.

"What is it, spindle-shanks?"

"I trust thith is not the end of the prince's education. He has much yet to learn."

"No, no; I will send him back when the town falls. But he nears the age when he must learn by doing, not merely by listening to your rarefied wisdom. Who is this?" Philip turned his one eye on me.

"Zandras, of India, a barbarian philothopher."

Philip grinned in a friendly way and clapped me on the shoulder. "Rejoice! Come to Pella and tell my generals about India. Who knows? A Macedonian foot may tread there yet."

"It would be more to the point to find out about Persia," said one of Philip's officers, a handsome fellow with a reddish-brown beard. "This man must have just come through there. How about it, man? Is the bloody Artaxerxes still solid on his throne?"

"I know little of such matters," I said, my heart beginning to pound at the threat of exposure. "I skirted the northernmost parts of the Great King's dominions and saw little of the big cities. I know nothing of their politics."

"Is that so?" said Redbeard, giving me a queer look. "We must talk of this again."

They all trooped into the big house, where the cook and the serving wenches were scurrying about. During dinner I found myself between Nearchos, Alexander's little Cretan friend, and a man-at-arms who spoke no Attic. So I did not get much conversation, nor could I follow much of the chatter that went on among the group at the head of the tables. I gathered that they were discussing politics. I asked Nearchos who the generals were.

"The big one at the king's right is the Parmenion," he said, "and the one with the red beard is the Attalos."

When the food was taken away and the drinking had begun, Attalos came over to me. The man-at-arms gave him his place. Attalos had drunk a lot of wine already; but, if it made him a little unsteady, it did not divert him.

"How did you come through the Great King's domain?" he asked. "What route did you follow?"

"I told you, to the north," I said.

"Then you must have gone through Orchoe."

"I—" I began, then stopped. Attalos might be laying a trap for me. What if I said yes and Orchoe was really in the south? Or suppose he had been there and knew all about the place? Many Greeks and Macedonians served the Great King as mercenaries.

"I passed through many places whose names I never got straight," I said. "I do not remember if Orchoe was among them."

Attalos gave me a sinister smile through his beard. "Your journey will profit you little, if you cannot remember where you have been. Come, tell me if you heard of unrest among the northern provinces."

I evaded the question, taking a long pull on my wine to cover my hesitation. I did this again and again until Attalos said: "Very well, perhaps you are

really as ignorant of Persia as you profess. Then tell me about India."

"What about it?" I hiccupped; the wine was beginning to affect me, too.

"As a soldier, I should like to know of the Indian art of war. What is this about training elephants to fight?"

"Oh, we do much better than that."

"How so?"

"We have found that the flesh-and-blood elephant, despite its size, is an untrustworthy war beast because it often takes fright and stampedes back through its own troops. So, the philosophers of Pataliputra make artificial elephants of steel with rapid-fire catapults on their backs."

I was thinking in a confused way of the armored war vehicles of my own world. I do not know what made me tell Attalos such ridiculous lies. Partly, I suppose, it was to keep him off the subject of Persia.

Partly it was a natural antipathy between us. According to history, Attalos was not a bad man, though at times a reckless and foolish one. But it annoyed me that he thought he could pump me by subtle questions, when he was about as subtle as a ton of bricks. His voice and manner said as plainly as words: I am a shrewd, sharp fellow; watch out for me, everybody. He was the kind of man who, if told to spy on the enemy, would don an obviously false beard, wrap himself in a long black cloak, and go slinking about the enemy's places in broad daylight, leering and winking and attracting as much attention as possible. No doubt, too, he had prejudiced me against him by his alarming curiosity about my past.

But the main cause for my rash behavior was the strong wine I had drunk. In my own world, I drank very little and so was not used to these carousals.

Attalos was all eyes and ears at my tale of mechanical elephants. "You do not say!"

"Yes, and we do even better than that. If the enemy's ground forces resist the charge of our iron elephants, we send flying chariots, drawn by gryphons, to drop darts on the foe from above." It seemed to me that never had my imagination been so brilliant.

Attalos gave an audible gasp. "What else?"

"Well—ah—we also have a powerful navy, you know, which controls the lower Ganges and the adjacent ocean. Our ships move by machinery, without oars or sails."

"Do the other Indians have these marvels too?"

"Some, but none is so advanced as the Pataliputrans. When we are outnumbered on the sea, we have a force of tame Tritons who swim under the enemy's ships and bore holes in their bottoms."

Attalos frowned. "Tell me, barbarian, how it is that, with such mighty instruments of war, the Palalal—the Patapata—the people of your city have not conquered the whole world?"

I gave a shout of drunken laughter and slapped Attalos on the back. "We *have,* old boy, we have! You Macedonians have just not yet found out that you are our subjects!"

Attalos digested this, then scowled blackly. "You temple-thief I I think you have been making a fool of me! Of *me!* By Herakles, I ought —"

He rose and swung a fist back to clout me. I jerked an arm up to guard my face.

There came a roar of "Attalos!" from the head of the table. King Philip had been watching us.

Attalos dropped his fist, muttered something like "Flying chariots and tame Tritons, forsooth!" and stumbled back to his own crowd.

This man, I remembered, did not have a happy future in store. He was destined to marry his niece to Philip, whose first wife Olympias would have the girl and her baby killed after Philip's assassination. Soon afterwards, Attalos would be murdered by Alexander's orders. It was on the tip of my tongue to give him a veiled warning, but I forebore. I had attracted enough hostile attention already.

Later, when the drinking got heavy, Aristotle came over and shooed his boys off to bed. He said to me: "Let uth walk outside to clear our heads, Zandras, and then go to bed, too. These Makedones drink like sponges. I cannot keep up with them."

Outside, he said: "The Attalos thinks you are a Persian thpy."

"A spy? Me? In Hera's name, why?" Silently I cursed my folly in making an enemy without any need. Would I never learn to deal with this damned human species?

Aristotle said: "He thays nobody could pass through a country and remain as ignorant of it as you theem to be. *Ergo,* you know more of the Persian Empire than you pretend, but wish us to think you have nothing to do with it. And why should you do that, unleth you are yourself a Persian? And being a Persian, why should you hide the fact unleth you are on some hostile mission?"

"A Persian might fear anti-Persian prejudice among the Hellenes. Not that I am one," I hastily added.

"He need not. Many Persians live in Hellas without molestation. Take Artabazos and his sons, who live in Pella, refugees from their own king."

Then the obvious alibi came to me, long after it should have. "The fact is I went even farther north than I said. I went around the northern ends of the Caspian and Euxine seas and so did not cross the Great King's domains save through the Bactrian deserts."

"You did? Then why did you not thay tho? If that is true, you have settled one of our hottest geographical disputes: whether the Caspian is a closed thea or a bay of the Northern Ocean."

"I feared nobody would believe me."

"I am not sure what to believe, Zandras. You are a strange man. I do not think you are a Persian, for no Persian was ever a philothopher. It is good for you that you are not."

"Why?"

"Because I *hate* Persia!" he hissed.

"You do?"

"Yeth. I could list the wrongs done by the Great Kings, but it is enough that they seized my beloved father-in-law by treachery and torture, and crucified him. People like Isokrates talk of uniting the Hellenes to conquer Persia, and Philippos may try it if he lives. I hope he does. However," he went on in a different tone, "I hope he does it without dragging the cities of Hellas into it, for the repositories of civilization have no busineth getting into a brawl between tyrants."

"In India," said I sententiously, "we are taught that a man's nationality means nothing and his personal qualities everything. Men of all nations come good, bad, and indifferent"

Aristotle shrugged. "I have known virtuouth Persians too, but that monstrouth, bloated empire . . . No state can be truly civilized with more than a few thousand citizens."

There was no use telling him that large states, however monstrous and bloated he thought them, would be a permanent feature of the landscape from then on. I was trying to reform, not Aristotle's narrow view of international affairs, but his scientific methodology.

Next morning King Philip and his men and Aristotle's six pupils galloped off toward Pella, followed by a train of baggage mules and the boys' personal slaves. Aristotle said:

"Let us hope no chance sling-throne dashes out Alexandros' brains before he has a chance to show his mettle. The boy has talent and may go far, though managing him is like trying to plow with a wild bull. Now, let us take up the question of atoms again, my dear Zandras, about which you have been talking thuch utter rubbish. First, you must admit that if a thing exists, parts of it must also exist. Therefore there is no thuch thing as an indivisible particle . . ."

Three days later, while we were still hammering at the question of atoms, we looked up at the clatter of hooves. Here came Attalos and a whole troop of horsemen. Beside Attalos rode a tall swarthy man with a long gray beard. This man's appearance startled me into thinking he must be another time traveler from my own time, for he wore a hat, coat, and pants. The mere sight of these familiar garments filled me with homesickness for my own world, however much I hated it when I lived in it.

Actually, the man's garb was not that of one from my world. The hat was a cylindrical felt cap with ear flaps. The coat was a brown knee-length garment,

embroidered with faded red and blue flowers, with trousers to match. The whole outfit looked old and threadbare, with patches showing. He was a big craggy-looking fellow, with a great hooked nose, wide cheekbones, and deep-set eyes under bushy, beetling brows.

They all dismounted, and a couple of grooms went around collecting the bridles to keep the horses from running off. The soldiers leaned on their spears in a circle around us.

Attalos said: "I should like to ask your guest some more philosophical questions, O Aristoteles."

"Ask away."

Attalos turned, not to me, but to the tall graybeard. He said something I did not catch, and then the man in trousers spoke to me in a language I did not know.

"I do not understand," I said.

The graybeard spoke again, in what sounded like a different tongue. He did this several times, using a different-sounding speech each time, but each time I had to confess ignorance.

"Now you see," said Attalos. "He pretends not to know Persian, Median, Armenian, or Aramaic. He could not have traversed the Great King's dominions from east to west without learning at least one of these."

"Who are you, my dear sir?" I asked Graybeard.

The old man gave me a small dignified smile and spoke in Attic with a guttural accent. "I am Artavazda, or Artabazos as the Hellenes say, once governor of Phrygia but now a poor pensioner of King Philippos."

This, then, was the eminent Persian refugee of whom Aristotle had spoken.

"I warrant he does not even speak Indian," said Attalos.

"Certainly," I said, and started off in English: *"Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the party. Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth—"*

"What would you call that?" Attalos asked Artavazda.

The Persian spread his hands. "I have never heard the like. But then, India is a vast country of many tongues."

"I was not—" I began, but Attalos kept on: "What race would you say he belonged to?"

"I know not. The Indians I have seen were much darker, but there might be light-skinned Indians for aught I know."

"If you will listen, General, I will explain," I said. "For most of the journey I was not even in the Persian Empire. I crossed through Bactria and went around the north of the Caspian and Euxine seas."

"Oh, so now you tell another story'!" said Attalos. "Any educated man knows the Caspian is but a deep bay opening into the Ocean River to the

north. Therefore you could not go around it. So, in trying to escape, you do but mire yourself deeper in your own lies."

"Look here," said Aristotle. "You have proved nothing of the sort, O Attalos. Ever thince Herodotos there have been those who think the Caspian a closed thea—"

"Hold your tongue, Professor," said Attalos. "This is a matter of national security. There is something queer about this alleged Indian, and I mean to find out what it is."

"It is not queer that one who comes from unknown distant lands should tell a singular tale of his journey."

"No, there is more to it than that. I have learned that he first appeared in a treetop on the farm of the freeholder Diktys Pisandrou. Diktys remembers looking up into the tree for crows before he cast himself down under it to rest. If the Zandras had been in the tree, Diktys would have seen him, as it was not yet fully in leaf. The next instant there was the crash of a body falling into the branches, and Zandras' staff smote Diktys on the head. Normal mortal men fall not out of the sky into trees."

"Perhaps he flew from India. They have marvelous mechanisms there, he tells me," said Aristotle.

"If he survives our interrogation in Pella, perhaps he can make me a pair of wings," said Attalos. "Or better yet, a pair for my horse, so he shall emulate Pegasos. Meanwhile, seize and bind him, men!"

The soldiers moved. I did not dare submit for fear they would take my gun and leave me defenceless. I snatched up the hem of my tunic to get at my pistol. It took precious seconds to unsnap the safety strap, but I got the gun out before anybody laid hand on me.

"Stand back or I will blast you with lightning!" I shouted, raising the gun.

Men of my own world, knowing how deadly such a weapon can be, would have given ground at the sight of it. But the Macedonians, never having seen one, merely stared at the device and came on. Attalos was one of the nearest.

I fired at him, then whirled and shot another soldier who was reaching out to seize me. The discharge of the gun produces a lightning-like. flash and a sharp sound like a close clap of thunder. The Macedonians cried out, and Attalos fell with a wound in his thigh.

I turned again, looking for a way out of the circle of soldiers, while confused thoughts of taking one of their horses flashed through my head. A heavy blow in the flank staggered me. One of the soldiers had jabbed me with his spear, but my belt kept the weapon from piercing me. I shot at the man but missed him in my haste.

"Do not kill him!" screamed Aristotle.

Some of the soldiers backed up as if to flee; others poised their spears. They hesitated for the wink of an eye, either for fear of me or because Aristotle's

command confused them. Ordinarily they would have ignored the philosopher and listened for their general's orders, but Attalos was down on the grass and looking in amazement at the hole in his leg.

As one soldier dropped his spear and started to run, a blow on the head sent a flash of light through my skull and hurled me to the ground, nearly unconscious. A man behind me had swung his spear like a club and struck me on the pate with the shaft.

Before I could recover, they were all over me, raining kicks and blows. One wrenched the gun from my hand. I must have lost consciousness, for the next thing I remember is lying in the dirt while the soldiers tore off my tunic. Attalos stood over me with a bloody bandage around his leg. leaning on a soldier. He looked pale and frightened but resolute. The second man I had shot lay still.

"So that is where he keeps his infernal devices!" said Attalos, indicating my belt. "Take it off, men."

The soldiers struggled with the clasp of the belt until one impatiently sawed through the straps with his dagger. The gold in my money pouch brought cries of delight.

I struggled to get up, but a pair of soldiers knelt on my arms to keep' me down. There was a continuous mumble of talk. Attalos, looking over the belt, said:

"He is too dangerous to live. Even stripped as he is, who knows but what he will soar into the air and escape by magic?"

"Do not kill him!" said Aristotle. "He has much valuable knowledge to impart."

"No knowledge is worth the safety of the kingdom."

"But the kingdom can benefit from his knowledge. Do you not agree?" Aristotle asked the Persian.

"Drag me not into this, pray," said Artavazda. "It is no concern of mine."

"If he is a danger to Makedonia, he should be destroyed at once," said Attalos.

"There is but little chance of his doing harm now," said Aristotle, "and an excellent chance of his doing us good."

"Any chance of his doing harm is too much," said Attalos. "You philosophers can afford to be tolerant of interesting strangers. But, if they carry disaster in their baggage, it is on us poor soldiers that the brunt will fall. Is it not so, Artabazos?"

"I have done what you asked and will say no more," said Artavazda. "I am but a simple-minded Persian nobleman who does not understand your Greek subtleties."

"I can increase the might of your armies, General!" I cried to Attalos.

"No doubt, and no doubt you can also turn men to stone with an incantation, as the Gorgons did with their glance."

He drew his sword and felt the edge with his thumb.

"You will slay him for mere thuperstition!" wailed Aristotle, wringing his hands. "At least, let the king judge the matter."

"Not superstition," said Attalos; "murder." He pointed to the dead soldier.

"I come from another world! Another age!" I yelled, but Attalos was not to be diverted.

"Let us get this over with," he said. "Set him on his knees, men. Take my sword, Glaukos; I am too unsteady to wield it.

"Now bow your head, my dear barbarian, and—"

In the middle of Attalos' sentence, he and the others and all my surroundings vanished. Again there came that sharp pain and sense of being jerked by a monstrous catapult . . .

I found myself lying in leaf mold with the pearl-gray trunks of poplars all around me. A brisk breeze was making the poplar leaves flutter and show their silvery bottoms. It was too cool for a man who was naked save for sandals and socks.

I had snapped back to the year 1981 of the calendar of my world, which I had set out from. But where was I? I should be near the site of the Brookhaven National Laboratories in a vastly improved super-scientific world. There was, however, no sign of super-science here; nothing but poplar trees.

I got up, groaning, and looked around. I was covered with bruises and bleeding from nose and mouth.

The only way I had of orienting myself was the boom of a distant surf. Shivering, I hobbled towards the sound. After a few hundred paces, I came out of the forest on a beach. This beach could be the shore of Sewanhaki, or Long Island as we called it, but there was no good way of telling. There was no sign of human life; just the beach curving into the distance and disappearing around headlands, with the poplar forest on one side and the ocean on the other.

What, I wondered, had happened? Had science advanced so fast as a result of my intervention that man had already exterminated himself by scientific warfare? Thinkers of my world had concerned themselves with this possibility, but I had never taken it seriously.

It began to rain. In despair I cast myself down on the sand and beat it with my fists. I may have lost consciousness again.

At any rate, the next thing I knew was the now-familiar sound of hooves. When I looked up, the horseman was almost upon me, for the sand had muffled the animal's footsteps until it was quite close.

I blinked with incredulity. For an instant I thought I must be back in the classical era still. The man was a warrior armed and armored in a style much like that of ancient times. At first he seemed to be wearing a helmet of classical Hellenic type. When he came closer I saw that this was not quite true, for the

crest was made of feathers instead of horsehair. The nasal and cheek plates hid most of his face, but he seemed dark and beardless. He wore a shirt of scale mail, long leather trousers, and low shoes. He had a bow and a small shield hung from his saddle and a slender lance slung across his back by a strap. I saw that this could not be ancient times because the horse was fitted with a large, well-molded saddle and stirrups.

As I watched the man stupidly, he whisked the lance out of its boot and couched it. He spoke in an unknown language.

I got up, holding my hands over my head in surrender. The man kept repeating his question, louder and louder, and making jabbing motions. All I could say was "I don't understand" in the languages I knew, none of which seemed familiar to him.

Finally he maneuvered his horse around to the other side of me, barked a command, pointed along the beach the way he had come, and prodded me with the butt of the lance. Off I limped, with rain, blood, and tears running down my hide.

You know the rest, more or less. Since I could not give an intelligible account of myself, the Sachim of Lenape, Wayotan the Fat, claimed me as a slave. For fourteen years I labored on his estate at such occupations as feeding hogs and chopping kindling. When Wayotan died and the present Sachim was elected, he decided I was too old for that kind of work, especially as I was half crippled from the beatings of Wayotan and his overseers. Learning that I had some knowledge of letters (for I had picked up spoken and written Algonkian in spite of my wretched lot) he freed me and made me official librarian.

In theory I can travel about as I like, but I have done little of it. I am too old and weak for the rigors of travel in this world, and most other places are, as nearly as I can determine, about as barbarous as this one. Besides, a few Lenapes come to hear me lecture on the nature of man and the universe and the virtues of the scientific method. Perhaps I can light a small spark here after I failed in the year 340 B.C.

When I went to work in the library, my first thought was to find out what had happened to bring the world to its present pass.

Wayotan's predecessor had collected a considerable library which Wayotan had neglected, so that some of the books had been chewed by rats and others ruined by dampness. Still, there was enough to give me a good sampling of the literature of this world, from ancient to modem times. There were even Herodotos' history and Plato's dialogues, identical with the versions that existed in my own world.

I had to struggle against more language barriers, as the European languages of this world are different from, though related to, those of my own world. The English of today, for instance, is more like the Dutch of my own world, as a result of England's never having been conquered by the Normans.

I also had the difficulty of reading without eyeglasses. Luckily, most of these manuscript books are written in a large, clear hand. A couple of years ago I did get a pair of glasses, imported from China, where the invention of the printing press has stimulated their manufacture. But, as they are a recent invention in this world, they are not so effective as those of mine.

I rushed through all the history books to find out when and how your history diverged from mine. I found that differences appeared quite early. Alexander still marched to the Indus but failed to die at thirty-two on his return. In fact he lived fifteen years longer and fell at last in battle with the Sarmatians in the Caucasus Mountains.

I do not know why that brief contact with me enabled him to avoid the malaria mosquito that slew him in my world. Maybe I aroused in him a keener interest in India than he would otherwise have had, leading him to stay there longer so that all his subsequent schedules were changed. His empire held together for most of a century instead of breaking up right after his death as it did in my world.

The Romans still conquered the whole Mediterranean, but the course of their conquests and the names of the prominent Romans were all different. Two of the chief religions of my world, Christianity and Islam, never appeared at all. Instead we have Mithraism, Odinism, and Soterism, the last an Egypto-Hellenic synthesis founded by that fiery Egyptian prophet whose followers call him by the Greek word for "savior."

Still, classical history followed the same *general* course that it had in my world, even though the actors bore other names. The Roman Empire broke up, as it did in my world, though the details are all different, with a Hunnish emperor ruling in Rome and a Gothic one in Antioch.

It is after the fall of the Roman Empire that profound differences appear. In my world there was a revival of learning that began about nine hundred years ago, followed by a scientific revolution beginning four centuries later. In your history the revival of learning was centuries later, and the scientific revolution has hardly begun. Failure to develop the compass and the full-rigged ship resulted in North America's (I mean Hesperia's) being discovered and settled via the northern route, by way of Iceland, and more slowly than in my world. Failure to invent the gun meant that the natives of Hesperia were not swept aside by the invading Europeans, but held their own against them and gradually learned their arts of iron-working, weaving, cereal-growing, and the like. Now most of the European settlements have been assimilated, though the ruling families of the Abnakis and Mohegans frequently have blue eyes and still call themselves by names like "Sven" and "Eric."

I was eager to get hold of a work by Aristotle, to see what effect I had had on him and to try to relate this effect to the subsequent course of history. From allusions in some of the works in this library I gathered that many of his

writings had come down to modern times, though the titles all seemed different from those of his surviving works in my world. The only actual samples of his writings in the library were three essays, *Of Justice, On Education,* and *Of Passions and Anger.* None of these showed my influence.

I had struggled through most of the Sachim's collection when I found the key I was looking for. This was an Iberic translation of *Lives of the Great Philosophers,* by one Diemedes of Mazaka. I never heard of Diomedes in the literary history of my own world, and perhaps he never existed. Anyway, he had a long chapter on Aristotle, in which appears the following section:

Now Aristotle, during his sojourn at Mytilene, had been an assiduous student of natural sciences. He had planned, according to Timotheus, a series of works which should correct the errors of Empedokles, Demokritos, and others of his predecessors. But, after he had removed to Macedonia and busied himself with the education of Alexander, there one day appeared before him a traveler, Sandos of Palibothra, a mighty philosopher of India.

The Indian ridiculed Aristotle's attempts at scientific research, saying that in his land these investigations had gone far beyond anything the Hellenes had attempted, and the Indians were still a long way from arriving at satisfactory explanations of the universe. Moreover, he asserted that no real progress could be made in natural philosophy unless the Hellenes abandoned their disdain for physical labor and undertook exhaustive experiments with mechanical devices of the sort which cunning Egyptian and Asiatic craftsmen make.

King Philip, hearing of the presence of this stranger in his land and fearing lest he be a spy sent by some foreign power to harm or corrupt the young prince, came with soldiers to arrest him. But, when he demanded that Sandos accompany him back to Pella, the latter struck dead with thunderbolts all the king's soldiers that were with him. Then, it is said, mounting into his chariot drawn by winged gryphons, he flew off in the direction of India. But other authorities say that the man who came to arrest Sandos was Antipatros, the regent, and that Sandos cast darkness before the eyes of Antipatros and Aristotle, and when they recovered from their swoon he had vanished.

Aristotle, reproached by the king for harboring so dangerous a visitor and shocked by the sanguinary ending of the Indian's visit, resolved to have no more to do with the sciences. For, as he explains in his celebrated treatise On the Folly of Natural Science, there are three reasons why no good Hellene should trouble his mind with such matters.

One is that the number of facts which must be mastered before sound theories become possible is so vast that if all the Hellenes did nothing else for centuries, they would still not gather the amount of data required. The task is therefore futile.

Secondly, experiments and mechanical inventions are necessary to progress in science, and such work, though all very well for slavish Asiatics, who have a natu-

ral bent for it, is beneath the dignity of a Hellenic gentleman.

And, lastly, some of the barbarians have already surpassed the Hellenes in this activity, wherefore it ill becomes the Hellenes to compete with their inferiors in skills at which the latter have an inborn advantage. They should rather cultivate personal rectitude, patriotic valor, political rationality, and aesthetic sensitivity, leaving to the barbarians such artificial aids to the good and virtuous life as are provided by scientific discoveries.

This was it, all right. The author had gotten some of his facts wrong, but that was to be expected from an ancient historian.

So! My teachings had been too successful. I had so well shattered the naive self-confidence of the Hellenic philosophers as to discourage them from going on with science at all.

I should have remembered that glittering theories and sweeping generalizations, even when wrong, are the frosting on the cake; they are the carrot that makes the donkey go. The possibility of pronouncing such universals is the stimulus that keeps many scientists grinding away, year after year, at the accumulation of facts, even seemingly dull and trivial facts. If ancient scientists had realized how much laborious fact-finding lay ahead of them before sound theories would become possible, they would have been so appalled as to drop science altogether. And that is just what happened.

The sharpest irony of all was that I had placed myself where I could not undo my handiwork. If I had ended up in a scientifically advanced world, and did not like what I found, I might have built another time machine, gone back, and somehow warned myself of the mistake lying in wait for me. But such a project is out of the question in a backward world like this one, where seamless columbium tubing, for instance, is not even thought of. All I proved by my disastrous adventure is that space-time has a negative curvature, and who in this world cares about that?

You recall, when you were last here, asking me the meaning of a motto in my native language on the wall of my cell. I said I would tell you in connection with my whole fantastic story. The motto says: "Leave Well Enough Alone," and I wish I had.

Cordially yours,
Sherman Weaver.

Language for Time Travelers

"Gradually, the rainbow flicker of light died away, and Morgan Jones felt the tingle leave his body. The dial read 2438. Five hundred years! He opened the door of the compartment and climbed out.

"At first, he saw nothing but fields and woods. He was evidently in a farming country. Nobody was in sight—no, here came a rustic along the road, trudging through the dust with his eyes on the ground in front of him.

" 'Hey there!' Jones called. 'Could you give me some information?'

"The man looked up; his eyes widened with astonishment at the sight of the machine. 'Wozza ya seh?' he asked.

"Jones repeated his question.

" 'Sy; daw geh,' said the man, shaking his head.

"Now Jones looked puzzled. 'I don't seem to understand you. What language are you speaking?'

" 'Wah lenksh? Enksh lenksh, coss. Wah *you* speak? Said say-y, daw geh-ih. Daw, neitha. You fresh? Jumm?'

"Jones had an impulse to shake his head violently, the same feeling he always had when the last word of a crossword puzzle eluded him. The man had understood him, partly, and the noises he made were somehow vaguely like English, but no English such as Jones had ever heard. 'Inksh lenksh' must be 'English language'; 'sah-y daw geh-ih' was evidently 'sorry, don't get it.'

" 'What,' he asked, 'is a fresh jumm?'

" 'Nevva huddum?' said the rustic, scorn in his tone. 'Fresh people, go *Oui, oui, parlez-vous Francais, va t'en, sale bete!*' He did this with gestures. Then he stiffened. 'Jumms go'—he clicked his heels together—*'Achtung! Vorwärts, marsch! Guten Tag, meine Herren! Verstehen Sie Deutsch?* Fresh from Fress; Jumms from Jummy. Geh ih?'

" 'Yes, I suppose so,' said Jones. His mind was reeling slightly—"

Thus might almost any novel on the time-travel theme or the Rip Van Winkle theme begin. The author, having landed his hero in the far future, may either ascribe telepathy to the people of the time, or remark on how the English language will have changed. The foregoing selection shows—in somewhat more detail than do most of the stories—a few of the actual changes that might take place. To be strictly consistent, I should have changed the French and German selection also, but, in the first place, I don't know enough about French and German to predict their future evolution, and, in the second, it would have made the rustic's explanation utterly unintelligible. It might be interesting to consider in detail just what change may occur. To do this thing right we shall have to first take a brief look at the language's present state and its past history.

English is a Germanic language, like German, Dutch, and Swedish, with a large infusion—perhaps a majority—of French words. Its parent tongue, Anglo-Saxon, was more highly inflected than its descendant—less so than Latin, but about as much so as modern German.*

Anglo-Saxon would sound to a modern hearer as much like a foreign language as German; English didn't become what would be intelligible to us until about the 16th Century. English of the 1500s would sound to us like some sort of Scots dialect, because it had the rolled "r" and the fricative consonants heard in German: *ich, ach* (that's what all those silent *gh's* in modern English spelling mean—or rather, used to mean) which have been retained in Scottish English, but lost or transformed in most other kinds of English. We have a fair idea of the pronunciation of Shakespeare's time because about then people began writing books on the subject. It's amusing to reflect that if Shakespeare returned to Earth, he'd get along passably in Edinburgh; he could manage, with some difficulty, in Chicago—but he'd be hopelessly lost in London, whose dialect would differ most radically from his! So much for the "language of Shakespeare"!

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* For instance, the noun *end* in Anglo-Saxon had these forms:

	Singular	*Plural*
Nominative	ende	endas
Genitive	endes	enda
Dative	ende	endum
Accusative	ende	endas

[I once complained to the late Willy Ley about German's damnable inflected articles and adjectives, which have defeated my half-century of effort to learn to speak the language correctly. In his deep, heavily accented voice, Willy said: "It is very simple. You only have to be born there!" L.S. de C., 1977.]

Authors are fairly safe in having the people of the future speak English—which is very convenient for the authors. Aside from the fact that nobody can prove them wrong, English is, today, well on the way to becoming the world's international language. It is probably taught in the schools of more countries than any other. In number of speakers it is exceeded only by Cantonese and Mandarin, the chief languages of China, each of which is divided into a myriad of mutually unintelligible dialects; its nearest rivals, Spanish and German, are far behind it in number of speakers. It's a concise language,* and the simplicity of its grammar makes it easy to learn, though its fearsome spelling is an obstacle to the student. It's a safe bet that another century will see it as the second language of every passably educated person on Earth, and in another millennium it may well be the only living language.

Like all living languages, English is changing slowly but constantly in pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax. The first would probably cause our hero the most trouble. It changes pretty rapidly, and is responsible for the fantastic irregularity of English spelling, the spelling usually being a few centuries behind the pronunciation. The spelling of *caught* was reasonable when the word was pronounced "kowcht," with the "ch" as in German *ach.* But consider the number of sounds a single letter may represent today, as in *odd, off, come, worry, old, wolf, do, women, lemon.* Shades of sound can't be represented exactly by ordinary spelling, because all readers won't interpret the letters the same way; and some sounds simply can't be spelled: for instance, the *ir* part of *first* as often pronounced in New York City and parts of the South—a sound halfway between "oi" and "ay."

Speech sounds can be analyzed into fundamental units called *phonemes;* these move around like protozoa in a drop of water, and, like protozoa, join together and split up. For instance, a few centuries ago *person* and *parson* were one word, spelled *person* and pronounced "pairsan." But the "air" group of words split, some like *jerk* joining the words like *turn,* and some like *heart* joining the words like *march.* In this process *person* acquired two pronunciations with different meanings.

Much commoner is *leveling,* wherein two phonemes merge. For instance, *vain, vein,* and *vane* were once all pronounced differently; so were *right:wright:rite:write.* We can see the process at work in the leveling, by many Americans, of *due:do* and *Mary:merry:marry.* The British, with their loss of "r"

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* The same passage translated into various modern languages has the following numbers of syllables:

Cantonese	89	Ukrainian	189
Annamese	100	Hungarian	196
English	146	Greek	234
Spanish	157	Japanese	242

except when a vowel follows, do worse, leveling *over:ova, sort:sought*, and *paw:pour:poor*.

If the process goes far enough—as it has in those concise Chinese languages—language becomes a guessing game between speaker and hearer, and speech is one long pun. In some forms of Chinese a single spoken word may have as many as 69 distinct meanings. French is worse than English in this respect, but neither is anything like as terrible as Chinese. In English a hearer can usually tell, upon hearing such an ambiguous sound, which meaning is meant from the context. If, as some people do, you pronounce *whale* like *wail*, nobody will think, hearing you speak of harpooning a *whale*, that you really meant harpooning a *wail*. But if, as some do, you pronounce *oral* like *aural*, you're very likely to confuse your hearer if he doesn't know in advance what is coming.

If we add together all the leveling tendencies of modern English, we can synthesize a dialect in which *cud, card, cowed, coward* are all pronounced like *cod, tarred, torrid, tied, tired, towered* are all pronounced like *Todd; shaw, shore, sure* are pronounced like *show*, and so forth. This is a reasonable speculation: some Southerners pronounce *shore, sure* like *show*; some Londoners use an "ah" sound in *cud*, etc. I hope it never happens, but it might, and we should probably manage to communicate—though with more misunderstandings, especially over the telephone. Leveling seems to be an inevitable linguistic development, though literacy—a relatively new thing for the masses—may have a counter-effect. *Boil* and *bile* were once pronounced alike, but were pried apart by the influence of spelling.

The thing that would most completely bewilder our hero would be another Great Vowel Shift. The last occurred in the years 1400–1800, and resulted in changing *time, teem, team, tame* from "teem," "tame," "tehm," "tahm" to their present pronunciations. All the front vowels except those in *bit, bet* moved up. The top one, "ee," being unable to go higher, became a diphthong.* The back vowels underwent a similar change.

There are signs that another vowel shift, a little different from the last, impends. In London Cockney it has practically taken place: *punt* has become something like *pant, pant* like *pent, pent* like *paint, paint* like *pint*, and *pint* like *point. Call* has become like *coal*, and *coal* something like *cowl*.

Imagine our hero's predicament if this sort of thing becomes general. He crawls out of his time machine in 2438 AD, as stated at the beginning of the

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*If you can watch your tongue in a mirror while saying the vowels of *beet, bit, bait, bet, bat* without the "b" and the "t," you'll see why we say that *beet* has a high vowel and *bat* a low one. *Front* and *back* refer to the part of the tongue that is highest when the vowel is sounded; hence *beet*, etc., have front vowels while *odd, all, go, good, do* have back vowels; those in *above* are intermediate.

article, and promptly runs afoul of the law.

Hero: Beg pardon, but could you tell me—
Cop: Hanh? Didjue sy samtheng?
Hero: Yes, you see—
Cop: Speak ap; kent mike it aht.
Hero: Well—
Cop: Woss thowse fanny clowse? P'ride?
Hero: I'm sorry, but—
Cop: Downt annersten ja; kentcha speak English?
Hero: Yes, of course—
Cop: Woy downtcha, thane? Luck loik a spicious kerracter; bayter carn 'lohng to the stytion. Jile for you, me led!

Another factor in linguistic evolution is the influence of sounds on those preceding and following them. We tend to take short-cuts in getting from one sound to another. The "k" sounds in *cool* and *cube* differ slightly; the second is nearer "t" than the first, because of the influence of the following "y" sound. If this process goes far enough (as it did in Latin), the "ky" combination may become "ty," and finally "ty" may become "tch," as *statue* has changed from "stat-yue" to "stat-chue." Hence our descendants may pronounce *cube* as "chube."

Our weakness for shortcuts—plus plain laziness—results in the complete dropping of sounds. Hence we often hear "prob'ly," "partic'lar," and "comftable." The contracted forms "int'rest," "gen'ral" have become more or less standard; the others may follow in due course. Most of the "silent" letters in our spelling, as in *askEd, WrotE, KniGHt,* once stood for real sounds. The British outdo us in this respect, with their *Whitehall* "wittle" and *military* "miltry."

The British have slaughtered a large fraction of their r's; some of them have dropped "h" from their speech. The Scots have dealt similarly with "L" and "V," so that in Broad Scottish *gave* is "gay." The story is told of an Aberdeenian in a dry-goods store who held up a piece of cloth and asked the clerk,

"Oo?"
"Ay, oo."
"Ah oo?"
"Ay, ah oo."
"Ah ae oo?"
"Ay, ah ae oo."

Not to keep the reader in suspense any longer, "Ay, ah ae oo" means "Yes, all one wool." (In repeating this story, remember that "Ay" is pronounced like "eye.")

Our chief victim seems to have been "t," whence we often hear *posts, tests, loft, wanted* as "poce," "tess," "loff," "wanned." Sometimes we drop "n," nasal-

izing the preceding vowel to make up for it, as *don't,* some-times pronounced "dote" or "doh" with a nasal "o."

Let's suppose that our hero has been hailed before a magistrate. To change the assumptions a little, suppose that the vowels are still recognizable, but that dropping and assimilation have been going full blast.

Magistrate: Wahya, pridna?

Hero: Huh?

Mag: Said, wahya?

Hero: You mean, what's my name?

Mag: Coss ass wah I mee. Ass wah I said, in ih?

Hero: I'm sorry. It's Jones, j-o-n-e-s, Morgan Jones.

Mag: Orrigh. Now, weya from?

Hero: You mean, where am I from?

Mag: Doh like ya attude, pridna. Try to be feh, buh woh tollay dispeçfa attude. Iss a majrace coh, ya know.

Hero: You mean, this is a magistrate's court? I don't mean to be disrespectful, but

Mag: Weh, maybe in yooh faw. Eeah ya fahna, aw nah righ melly. Sodge, lock im up. Gah geh mel zannas dow ih, to zam is satty.

Hero: But look here, I don't need a mental examiner to examine my sanity—I'm all right mentally—

It seems our time-traveling hero may be reduced to the device adopted by a man I once knew who made a trip to Germany. Entering a hotel with a companion, be asked, in what he thought was German, for two rooms and bath. The clerk looked blank, then replied in something that was evidently intended to be English, but which conveyed no sense whatever to the American. After some futile vocalization of this sort, the clerk had an inspiration: he got out a pad and wrote in the plainest of English, "What do you gentlemen want?" The American took the pad and wrote, "Two rooms and bath," after which there was no more difficulty.

However, it's unsafe to say that English as a whole will take any particular course, merely because one of its many dialects shows signs of doing so. A phoneme may reverse its direction of change repeatedly: in King Alfred's time the first vowel in *after* was about that of modern *cat;* by 1400 it had moved down and back to the vowel of modern *calm;* by 1600 it had moved back to the *cat* position, where it still is with the great majority of Americans (don't let the dictionaries fool you with their "intermediate 'a' "). Finally in modern Southern British it has moved back down into the *calm* position again. This sort of thing can go on indefinitely.

Sounds that have been dropped can be restored by the influence of spelling. An example is the "t" in *often,* which was dropped long ago with the "t's" in *soften, listen, castle,* but which has been revived by a few speakers, including

President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Such an addition of a sound to a word is called a *spelling pronunciation* and is considered incorrect when first introduced. But sometimes one takes hold and becomes universal, after which it is "correct." Examples are the "h" in *hospital* and the "l" in *fault,* which originally (when the words were taken over from French) weren't sounded at all.

We might here dispose of the illusion that there is an absolute standard of "correctness" to which we can refer. There are no tablets of stone stating once and for all what is and isn't correct, and dictionaries are compiled by fallible human beings and often disagree. The only real standard, aside from individual prejudices, is the actual usage of educated people. The fact is not that we use pronunciations because they're correct, but that they're correct because we—or a large number of us—use them. If a hundred million people pronounce *after* with the vowel of *cat,* that's correct by definition, even though not the only correct form, dictionaries to the contrary notwithstanding.

The rate of change of pronunciation is probably dependent, to some extent, on the state of a civilization, and changes should take place more rapidly in periods when illiteracy is high, and schools and spelling have less braking effect. A collapse of civilization in the English-speaking world would make another vowel shift more likely, and result in more dropping and assimilation of sounds. If our hero knows this, he might be able to make a shrewd guess at the vicissitudes through which the world has passed even before he learns its actual history since his time.

English has numerous dialects, some being beyond the range of mutual intelligibility. A Scotsman I once knew would testify to this: he spent an unhappy afternoon trying to find Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn. After asking innumerable Brooklynites how to get to "Mair-r-rtle Ahvenü," one of them finally caught on and said, "Oh, you mean Moitle Ehvenya!"

But which dialect most resembles the English of the future? North America has four major dialects: those of New England, New York City, the South, and General American, which includes everything else. The British Isles have a much bigger variety; that of London and vicinity has, by virtue of London's being the capital and the commercial metropolis of Great Britain, acquired the prestige of a standard. Hence Londoners are wont to say that they speak true English, and anything else is a "bahb'rous dahlect." Often they argue that their form of speech is the "most beautiful," but that merely means that they're accustomed to it and so like it best. One feature of Southern British (the speech of educated Londoners and ruling-class Englishmen generally), the loss of "r" sounds except when a vowel follows, is also heard in New England, New York City and the South: others, such as the use of "ah" in *half, last, dance,* and about 150 similar words, occur in New England but are rare elsewhere in North America.

These dialects tend to evolve in different directions, like species. Unlike species, they also merge into intermediate forms. Right now, the forces tending to merge and homogenize them (radio, etc.) are much stronger than those tending to separate and diversify them. Given our mechanical culture, this is likely to continue until they have all been pretty well leveled. What will the result be?

The prestige of Southern British is high; European schools teach it. Many actors and radio announcers in this country imitate it—though the result is often more funny than impressive. But as a result of economic forces, the commercial and intellectual center of gravity of the English-speaking world seems to be shifting to this side of the Atlantic, which phenomenon should cause a decline in the prestige of Southern British. As this happens, some form of American speech will become the "world standard."

The dialects with the best chance of doing this are probably New York speech and General American. The former has the advantage of being the speech of the country's greatest metropolis and its cultural center. The latter has the advantage of numbers: about as many people speak it (90 or 100 million) as speak all the other kinds of English combined. It conforms more closely to the spelling, so that it is easier for foreigners to learn. My money would go on General American—but then, like most people, I'm probably prejudiced in favor of my native tongue. Very likely the final result will combine features of both dialects.*

Our grammar has been simplified about as much as it can be, so that only limited changes are to be looked for therein. We still have some irregular plurals, such as *child:children, mouse:mice, deer:deer;* these are hangovers from Anglo-Saxon, which had several declensions of nouns forming the plural differently.§ Given enough time, they will probably be cleaned up: *brethren,* for instance, has been displaced by the regular *brothers.* Our irregular verbs, such

*[Since this was written, the prestige of General American has risen; the affectation of British English by the theatrical profession has ceased; and the old New Yorkese dialect (pronouncing "oil burner" as "oil boina") shows signs of dying out L.S. de C., 1977.]

§For this undiluted blessing—the loss of a multitude of cases, forms, and rules—we are, probably, indebted to the fact that English was, for some centuries, the poor-man's tongue. The Normans invaded England, and made their language the language of all educated, refined people. For centuries, all who could write, wrote anything but English—usually Latin. The result was that English was free of all grammarians, conservatives, and formalists. The farmers, peddlers and country people proceeded joyfully to throw out large quantities of unnecessary verbiage that got in their way. By the time the grammarians again laid hands of the language, a lot of useful pruning had been accomplished.

as *take:took, drink:drank, put:put* are more numerous and will be harder to get rid of.

Idiomatic word combinations such as *make at, make away with, make bold, make good, make light of, make off, make off with, make out, make sure, make sure of, make up, make up to, make up with* are the despair of foreigners learning English, as their meanings cannot be derived from a consideration of their component words separately. The making of these combinations goes on all the time, and they are likely to cause our hero plenty of headaches.

Another change that may cause him difficulty is the dropping of understood words from sentences, as when we say "the man I saw" for "the man whom I saw," or "Going?" for "Are you going?" That's *ellipsis,* if you want a five-dollar word. We practice it when we write telegrams or newspaper heads. As with leveling and compression of words, we gain in speed at the expense of clarity. I recall once being puzzled by a headline reading "Little British Golf Victor." Did it mean that a horse named "Little British Golf" had won a race?

No. it transpired that a man named Little had won a golf tournament in England. Another read "Gold Hunt Started by Skeletons." Alas, a reading of the article dispelled my first cheerful picture of a crew of skeletons slogging off to the gold country with pick, pan, and pack mule. All that had happened was that somebody had dug up some skeletons, quite inanimate, and this discovery had caused local gossip about the possible existence of a buried cache or hoard of gold. Of course, the head writer had meant: "The Starting of a Hunt for Gold Has Been Caused by the Discovery of Skeletons." He simply assumed that the reader would fill in all the missing words.

Again, the Chinese languages are a horrible example: one may say that the Chinese talk in headlines. The table showing the comparative conciseness of languages, in the early part of this article, indicates the extraordinary terseness of Cantonese. Annamese, another Indo-Chinese language, is second on the list. Pitkin's *History of Human Stupidity* cites the Chinese proverb "Shi ju pu ju shi ch'u"—literally "Miss enter not like miss go out." Even a Chinese would be baffled by this unless he knew that it meant, "It is worse to imprison an innocent man than to release a culprit." As far as the actual words go, it might as well mean the opposite.

Suppose that as a result of a prolonged diet of headlines, English is reduced to a terseness like that of Cantonese. Our hero is being examined by the experts for whom the magistrate has sent. We'll neglect changes in pronunciation—I think you'll have had enough of my quasi-phonetic spelling—and concentrate on changes in syntax.

Hero: Welcome to my cell, gentlemen. Your names please?

1st Expert: I Mack.

2nd Ditto: I Sutton.

Hero: Delighted; you know my name of course. What do you want me to do?
Mack: From?
Hero: What?
Mack: No what, from.
Hero: Now, let's get this straight. You want to know where I'm from? That's easy; Philadelphia.
Sutton: No hear.
Hero: PHILADELPHIA.
Sutton: No mean no hear you; hear plenty. No hear Philadelphia.
Mack: Such place?
Sutton: Maybe. Ask more. Continent?
Hero: No, it's a city.
Sutton: No mean no. Philadelphia no continent, Philadelphia on continent. Six continent. Which?
Hero: I see—North America.
Mack: No North America Philadelphia.
Sutton: Crazy. Too bad.
Mack: Yes. Word-crazy. Too much word.
Hero: Say what is this? You two sit there like a couple of wooden Indians, and expect me to understand you from one or two words that you drop, and then you say *I've* got a verbal psychosis—
Mack: Proof. Escape. Fingerprint. Check, sanitarium.
Sutton: Right. Interest. Health. Too bad. *(They go out.)*

But actually, I doubt whether headlines will ever bring the language to this sad state. Their influence is probably confined to popularizing a few uncommon words, such as *laud, flay,* which are preferred to *praise* and *denounce* because of their shortness.

Changes in vocabulary are difficult to foresee, though we can classify, if we can't prophesy, them. When we have a new meaning to express, we can do any of several things: we can invent a new word out of whole cloth, like *gas, hooey.* We can combine Latin or Greek roots to make a word, like *Omithorhynchus, telephone.* We can combine parts of existing English words, as in *brunch* (Hollywood slang for an eleven o'clock meal). We can borrow a word from another modern language, either in something like its original form, as with *knout* (Russian), *khaki* (Hindustani), or corrupted, as with *crawfish* (Old French *crevice*), *dunk* (German *tunken).* Most often, we pile the new meaning on some unfortunate existing English word, which thereafter does double, triple, etc., duty. Thus *short* has acquired the meanings of a *short* circuit, a *short* story, a *short* movie such as newsreel, a *short* shot in artillery fire, a type of defect in iron castings, etc. Next to pronunciation changes, vocabulary changes will be

the most baffling of our hero's troubles with twenty-fifth century English. Perhaps he'd better take a course in sketching before starting his time journey: when words, both spoken and written, fail, he can fall back on pictures!

Words also become obsolete and disappear. Sometimes we adopt another way of saying the same thing, because of convenience, fads, or reasons unknown. Where we once said "I height Brown," we now say "I am called Brown" or "My name is Brown." (Germans still say "Ich heisse Braun.") The old second-person singular pronoun *thou* has become obsolete, the plural *you* being used instead.

Again, words may disappear because the things they refer to disappear. Thus *hacqueton* is obsolete, because nobody has used a hacqueton (a padded shirt worn under armor) for some centuries. *Buggy* and *frigate,* to name a couple, will probably follow *hacqueton* in all vocabularies save those of historians and specialists, unless somebody finds new meanings for them. Thus *clipper* has been saved by a transfer of its meaning to a modern object.

It's not strictly correct to say that today's slang is tomorrow's standard English, if we can judge from history. Of our vast "floating population" of slang terms, only the most useful few (like *mob,* originally a slang word) will be admitted to the company of words used in serious speech and writing. Our hero will find that most of the slang of his time has gone without a trace, and that the people of 2438 have a whole new set of slang terms wherewith to bewilder him. (I'm reminded of a time I had occasion to explain to a South African that by "the grub is fierce" I meant, not "the larva is ferocious," but "the food is unpalatable.")

Let's suppose that our hero has been let out of the psychopathic ward, and has convinced the authorities of his true origin. He's turned over to a local savant who is to act as his guide and interpreter. This time we'll concentrate on changes in vocabulary and idiom.

Savant: Morning, Mr. Jones. I'm Einstein Mobray, who is to symbiose you for a few days until you hoylize yourself.

Hero: I'm sorry—you're going to what me until I what myself?

Mobray: I mean, you're going to reside with me until you adapt yourself. "Symbiose" is from "symbiosis," meaning "living together"; "hoylize" is from "Hoyle," as in the old term "according to Hoyle," "in conformity with the prevailing rules." I'll try to avoid terms like that. I have a surprise for you: another man from the Early Industrial Period—about 1600. Ah, here he is. —come in, Godwin. This is Morgan Jones, who I was telling you of. Mr. Jones, Godwin Hill.

Hill: Verily, 'tis a great pleasure, Sir.

Mobray: Mr. Hill haved a most markworthy accident, whichby he was preserved from his time to ourn. He'll tell you of it, some day.

Hill: Faith, when I awoke I thought I had truly gone mad. And when they

told me the date, I said, "Faugh! 'Tis a likely tale!" But they were right, it seems. Pray, how goes your trouble with authority, Einstein?

Mobray: The cachet's still good, but I'll get up with the narrs yet. What happened, Mr. Jones, was that I was gulling my belcher—

Hero: Your what?

Mobray: Oh very well, my aerial vehicle propelled by expanding gasses, like a rocket. I was coasting it, and getted into the wrong layer, and they redded me down. The cachet means an upcough and thirty days' hanging.

Hill: 'Sblood, do they hang you for that?

Mobray: Not me, my silk. I mean, my operating permit will be suspended for thirty days, and I'll have to pay a fine. But I hope to get up with them.

Hero: You'll get up with them? Do you mean you'll arise at the same time they do?

Mobray: No, no, no! I mean I expect to exert influence to have the cachet rubbered.

Hill: You—your???

Mowbray: I mean, to have the summons cancelled.

Hero: Oh, *I* see. Just like fixing a ticket!

Hill: What, Mr. Jones? Does that not mean "attaching an admission card"?

Mobray: I'd never neured that he meant, "repairing a public conveyance." What *did* you mean, Mr. Jones?

Hero: Well, in my time, when a cop pinched you—

Hill: Cop? Pinched?

Mobray: (dials the portable telephone on his wrist) Quick, send up six dictionaries and a box of aspirin!

Hill: Aspirin? You mean "aspen"? There grows a tree by that name—

(CURTAIN)

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Faunas

When I was young, I loved in thought to plod
The lands of long ago, when creatures trod
The earth, with spines or fangs, or talon-shod,
Like none that lives today. I wish some god
Would whisk me back to stride the selfsame sod
As mammoth, saber-tooth, or sauropod
And others just as odd.

But now I know that on this present sphere,
However sane, conventional, and drear
My swarming fellow anthropoids appear,
Beneath the fragile civilized veneer
Of man lurk spirits every bit as queer
As brontosaurus or titanothere
And worthier of fear.

The Gnarly Man

Dr. Matilda Saddler first saw the gnarly man on the evening of June 14th, 1956, at Coney Island. The spring meeting of the Eastern Section of the American Anthropological Association had broken up, and Dr. Saddler had had dinner with two of her professional colleagues, Blue of Columbia and Jeffcott of Yale. She mentioned that she had never visited Coney and meant to go there that evening. She urged Blue and Jeffcott to come along, but they begged off.

Watching Dr. Saddler's retreating back, Blue of Columbia crackled: "The Wild Woman from Wichita. Wonder if she's hunting another husband?" He was a thin man with a small grey beard and a who-the-Hell-are-you-Sir expression.

"How many has she had?" asked Jeffcott of Yale.

"Three to date. Don't know why anthropologists lead the most disorderly private lives of any scientists. Must be that they study the customs and morals of all those different peoples, and ask themselves, 'If the Eskimos can do it why can't we?' I'm old enough to be safe, thank God."

"I'm not afraid of her," said Jeffcott. He was in his early forties and looked like a farmer uneasy in store-bought clothes. "I'm so very thoroughly married."

"Yeah? Ought to have been at Stanford a few years ago, when she was there. It wasn't safe to walk across the campus, with Tuthill chasing all the females and Saddler all the males."

Dr. Saddler had to fight her way off the subway train, as the adolescents who infest the platform of the B.M.T.'s Stillwell Avenue Station are probably the worst-mannered people on earth, possibly excepting the Dobu Islanders of the Western Pacific. She didn't much mind. She was a tall, strongly-built woman in her late thirties, who had been kept in trim by the outdoor rigors of her

profession. Besides, some of the inane remarks in Swift's paper on acculturation among the Arapaho Indians had gotten her fighting blood up.

Walking down Surf Avenue toward Brighton Beach, she looked at the concessions without trying them, preferring to watch the human types that did and the other human types that took their money. She did try a shooting gallery, but found knocking tin owls off their perch with a .22 too easy to be much fun. Long-range work with an army rifle was her idea of shooting.

The concession next to the shooting gallery would have been called a sideshow if there had been a main show for it to be a sideshow to. The usual lurid banner proclaimed the uniqueness of the two-headed calf, the bearded woman, Arachne the spider-girl, and other marvels. The piece de resistance was Ungo-Bungo the ferocious ape-man, captured in the Congo at a cost of twenty-seven lives. The picture showed an enormous Ungo-Bungo squeezing a hapless Negro in each hand, while others sought to throw a net over him.

Although Dr. Saddler knew perfectly well that the ferocious ape-man would turn out to be an ordinary Caucasian with false hair on his chest, a streak of whimsicality impelled her to go in. Perhaps, she thought, she could have some fun with her colleagues about it.

The spieler went through his leather-lunged harangue. Dr. Saddler guessed from his expression that his feet hurt. The tattooed lady didn't interest her, as her decorations obviously had no cultural significance, as they have among the Polynesians. As for the ancient Mayan, Dr. Saddler thought it in questionable taste to exhibit a poor microcephalic idiot that way. Professor Yogi's legerdemain and fire-eating weren't bad.

A curtain hung in front of Ungo-Bungo's cage. At the appropriate moment there were growls and the sound of a length of chain being slapped against a metal plate. The spieler wound up on a high note: ". . . ladies and gentlemen, the one and only Ungo-Bungo!" The curtain dropped.

The ape-man was squatting at the back of his cage. He dropped his chain, got up, and shuffled forward. He grasped two of the bars and shook them. They were appropriately loose and rattled alarmingly. Ungo-Bungo snarled at the patrons, showing his even yellow teeth.

Dr. Saddler stared hard. This was something new in the ape-man line. Ungo-Bungo was about five feet three, but very massive, with enormous hunched shoulders. Above and below his blue swimming trunks, thick grizzled hair covered him from crown to ankle. His short stout-muscled arms ended in big hands with thick gnarled fingers. His neck projected slightly forward, so that from the front he seemed to have but little neck at all.

His face— Well, thought Dr. Saddler, she knew all the living races of men, and all the types of freaks brought about by glandular maladjustment, and none of them had a face like *that*. It was deeply lined. The forehead between the short scalp hair and the brows on the huge supraorbital ridges receded

sharply. The nose, though wide, was not apelike; it was a shortened version of the thick hooked Armenoid or "Jewish" nose. The face ended in a long upper lip and a retreating chin. And the yellowish skin apparently belonged to Ungo-Bungo.

The curtain was whisked up again.

Dr. Saddler went out with the others, but paid another dime, and soon was back inside. She paid no attention to the spieler, but got a good position in front of Ungo-Bungo's cage before the rest of the crowd arrived.

Ungo-Bungo repeated his performance with mechanical precision. Dr. Saddler noticed that he limped a little as he came forward to rattle the bars, and that the skin under his mat of hair bore several big whitish scars. The last joint of his left ring finger was missing. She noted certain things about the proportions of his shin and thigh, of his forearm and upper arm, and his big splay feet.

Dr. Saddler paid a third dime. An idea was knocking at her mind somewhere, trying to get in; either she was crazy or physical anthropology was haywire or—something. But she knew that if she did the sensible thing, which was to go home, the idea would plague her from now on.

After the third performance she spoke to the spieler. "I think your Mr. Ungo-Bungo used to be a friend of mine. Could you arrange for me to see him after he finishes?"

The spieler checked his sarcasm. His questioner was so obviously not a—not the sort of dame who asks to see guys after they finish.

"Oh, him," he said. "Calls himself Gaffney, Clarence Aloysius Gaffney. That the guy you want?"

"Why, yes."

"Guess you can." He looked at his watch. "He's got four more turns to do before we close. I'll have to ask the boss." He popped through a curtain and called, "Hey, Morrie!" Then he was back. "It's okay. Morrie says you can wait in his office. Foist door to the right."

Morrie was stout, bald, and hospitable. "Sure, sure," he said, waving his cigar. "Glad to be of soivice, Miss Saddler. Chust a min while I talk to Gaffney's manager.'" He stuck his head out. "Hey, Pappas! Lady wants to talk to your ape-man later. I meant *lady.* Okay." He returned to orate on the difficulties besetting the freak business. "You take this Gaffney, now. He's the best damn ape-man in the business; all that hair really grows out a him. And the poor guy really has a face like that. But do people believe it? No! I hear 'em going out, saying about how the hair is pasted on, and the whole thing is a fake. It's mortifying." He cocked his head, listening. "That rumble wasn't no rollycoaster; it's gonna rain. Hope it's over by tomorrow. You wouldn't believe the way a rain can knock ya receipts off. If you drew a coive, it would be like this." He drew his finger horizontally through space, jerking it down sharply to indicate the

effect of rain. "But as I said, people don't appreciate what you try to do for 'em. It's not just the money; I think of myself as an ottist. A creative ottist. A show like this got to have balance and proportion, like any other ott . . ."

It must have been an hour later when a slow, deep voice at the door said, "Did somebody want to see me?"

The gnarly man was in the doorway. In street clothes, with the collar of his raincoat turned up and his hat brim pulled down, he looked more or less human, though the coat fitted his great sloping shoulders badly. He had a thick knobby walking stick with a leather loop near the top end. A small dark man fidgeted behind him.

"Yeah," said Morrie, interrupting his lecture. "Clarence, this is Miss Saddler, Miss Saddler, this is our Mister Gaffney, one of our outstanding creative ottists."

"Pleased to meetcha," said the gnarly man. "This is my manager, Mr. Pappas."

Dr. Saddler explained, and said she'd like to talk to Mr. Gaffney if she might. She was tactful; you had to be to pry into the private affairs of Naga headhunters, for instance. The gnarly man said he'd be glad to have a cup of coffee with Miss Saddler; there was a place around the corner that they could reach without getting wet.

As they started out, Pappas followed, fidgeting more and more. The gnarly man said, "Oh, go home to bed, John. Don't worry about me." He grinned at Dr. Saddler. The effect would have been unnerving to anyone but an anthropologist. "Every time he sees me talking to anybody, he thinks it's some other manager trying to steal me." He spoke General American, with a suggestion of Irish brogue in the lowering of the vowels in words like "man" and "talk." "I made the lawyer who drew up our contract fix it so it can be ended on short notice."

Pappas departed, still looking suspicious. The rain had practically ceased. The gnarly man stepped along smartly despite his limp. A woman passed with a fox terrier on a leash. The dog sniffed in the direction of the gnarly man, and then to all appearances went crazy, yelping and slavering. The gnarly man shifted his grip on the massive stick and said quietly, "Better hang on to him, ma'am." The woman departed hastily. "They just don't like me," commented Gaffney. "Dogs, that is."

They found a table and ordered their coffee. When the gnarly man took off his raincoat, Dr. Saddler became aware of a strong smell of cheap perfume. He got out a pipe with a big knobbly bowl. It suited him, just as the walking stick did. Dr. Saddler noticed that the deep-sunk eyes under the beetling arches were light hazel.

"Well?" he said in his rumbling drawl. She began her questions.

"My parents were Irish," he answered. "But I was born in South Boston—

let's see—forty-six years ago. I can get you a copy of my birth certificate. Clarence Aloysius Gaffney, May 2, 1910." He seemed to get some secret amusement out of that statement.

"Were either of your parents of your somewhat unusual physical type?"

He paused before answering. He always did, it seemed. "Uh-huh. Both of 'em. Glands, I suppose."

"Were they both born in Ireland?"

"Yep. County Sligo." Again that mysterious twinkle.

She paused. "Mr. Gaffney, you wouldn't mind having some photographs and measurements made, would you? You could use the photographs in your business."

"Maybe." He took a sip. "Ouch! Gazooks, that's hot!"

"What?"

"I said the coffee's hot."

"I mean, before that."

The gnarly man looked a little embarrassed. *"Oh,* you mean the 'gazooks'? Well, I—uh—once knew a man who used to say that."

"Mr. Gaffney, I'm a scientist, and I'm not trying to get anything out of you for my own sake. You can be frank with me."

There was something remote and impersonal in his stare that gave her a slight spinal chill. "Meaning that I haven't been so far?"

"Yes. When I saw you I decided that there was something extraordinary in your background. I still think there is. Now, if you think I'm crazy, say so and we'll drop the subject. But I want to get to the bottom of this."

He took his time about answering. "That would depend." There was another pause. Then he said, "With your connections, do you know any really first-class surgeons?"

"But—yes, I know Dunbar."

"The guy who wears a purple gown when he operates? The guy who wrote a book on *God, Man, and the Universe?"*

"Yes. He's a good man, in spite of his theatrical mannerisms. Why? What would you want of him?"

"Not what you're thinking. I'm satisfied with my-—uh—unusual physical type. But I have some old injuries—broken bones that didn't knit properly—that I want fixed up. He'd have to be a good man, though. I have a couple of thousand in the savings bank, but I know the sort of fees those guys charge. If you could make the necessary arrangements—"

"Why, yes, I'm sure I could. In fact I could guarantee it. Then I *was* right? And you'll—" She hesitated.

"Come clean? Uh-huh. But remember, I can still prove I'm Clarence Aloysius if I have to."

"Who *are* you, then?"

Again there was a long pause. Then the gnarly man said, "Might as well tell you. As soon as you repeat any of it, you'll have put your professional reputation in my hands, remember.

"First off, I wasn't born in Massachusetts. I was born on the upper Rhine, near Mommenheim, and as nearly as I can figure out, about the year 50,000 B.C."

Dr. Saddler wondered whether she'd stumbled on the biggest thing in anthropology or whether this bizarre man was making Baron Munchausen look like a piker.

He seemed to guess her thoughts. "I can't prove that, of course. But so long as you arrange about that operation, I don't care whether you believe me or not."

"But—but—how?"

"I think the lightning did it. We were out trying to drive some bison into a pit. Well, this big thunderstorm came up, and the bison bolted in the wrong direction. So we gave up and tried to find shelter. And the next thing I knew I was lying on the ground with the rain running over me, and the rest of the clan standing around wailing about what had they done to get the storm-god sore at them, so he made a bull's-eye on one of their best hunters. They'd never said *that* about me before. It's funny how you're never appreciated while you're alive.

"But I was alive, all right. My nerves were pretty well shot for a few weeks, but otherwise I was all right except for some burns on the soles of my feet. I don't know just what happened, except I was reading a couple of years ago that scientists had located the machinery that controls the replacement of tissue in the medulla oblongata. I think maybe the lightning did something to my medulla to speed it up. Anyway I never got any older after that. Physically, that is. And except for those broken bones I told you about. I was thirty-three at the time, more or less. We didn't keep track of ages. I look older now, because the lines in your face are bound to get sort of set after a few thousand years, and because our hair was always gray at the ends. But I can still tie an ordinary *Homo sapiens* in a knot if I want to."

"Then you're—you mean to say you're—you're trying to tell me you're—"

"A Neanderthal man? *Homo neanderthalensis?* That's right."

Matilda Saddler's hotel room was a bit crowded, with the gnarly man, the frosty Blue, the rustic Jeffcott, Dr. Saddler herself, and Harold McGannon the historian. This McGannon was a small man, very neat and pink-skinned. He looked more like a New York Central director than a professor. Just now his expression was one of fascination. Dr. Saddler looked full of pride; Professor Jeffcott looked interested but puzzled; Dr. Blue looked bored. (He hadn't wanted to come in the first place.) The gnarly man, stretched out in the most comfortable chair and puffing his overgrown pipe, seemed to be enjoying himself.

McGannon was asking a question. "Well, Mr. Gaffney? I suppose that's your name as much as any."

"You might say so," said the gnarly man. "My original name was something like Shining Hawk. But I've gone under hundreds of names since then. If you register in a hotel as 'Shining Hawk' it's apt to attract attention. And I try to avoid that."

"Why?" asked McGannon.

The gnarly man looked at his audience as one might look at willfully stupid children. "I don't like trouble. The best way to keep out of trouble is not to attract attention. That's why I have to pull up stakes and move every ten or fifteen years. People might get curious as to why I never got any older."

"Pathological liar," murmured Blue. The words were barely audible, but the gnarly man heard them.

"You're entitled to your opinion, Dr. Blue," he said affably. "Dr. Saddler's doing me a favor, so in return I'm letting you all shoot questions at me. And I'm answering. I don't give a damn whether you believe me or not."

McGannon hastily threw in another question. "How is it that you have a birth certificate, as you say you have?"

"Oh, I knew a man named Clarence Gaffney once. He got killed by an automobile, and I took his name."

"Was there any reason for picking this Irish background?"

"Are you Irish, Dr. McGannon?"

"Not enough to matter."

"Okay. I didn't want to hurt any feelings. It's my best bet. There are real Irishmen with upper lips like mine."

Dr. Saddler broke in. "I meant to ask you, Clarence." She put a lot of warmth into his name. "There's an argument as to whether your people interbred with mine, when mine overran Europe at the end of the Mousterian. It's been thought that the 'old black breed' of the west coast of Ireland might have a little Neanderthal blood."

He grinned slightly. "Well—yes and no. There never was any back in the Stone Age, as far as I know. But these long-lipped Irish are my fault."

"How?"

"Believe it or not, but in the last fifty centuries there have been some women of your species that didn't find me too repulsive. Usually there were no offspring. But in the sixteenth century I went to Ireland to live. They were burning too many people for witchcraft in the rest of Europe to suit me at that time. And there was a woman. The result this time was a flock of hybrids—cute little devils they were. So the 'old black breed' are my descendants."

"What did happen to your people?" asked McGannon. "Were they killed off?"

The gnarly man shrugged. "Some of them. We weren't at all warlike. But then the tall ones, as we called them, weren't either. Some of the tribes of the

tall ones looked on us as legitimate prey, but most of them let us severely alone. I guess they were almost as scared of us as we were of them. Savages as primitive as that are really pretty peaceable people. You have to work so hard, and there are so few of you, that there's no object in fighting wars. That comes later, when you get agriculture and livestock, so you have something worth stealing.

"I remember that a hundred years after the tall ones had come, there were still Neanderthalers living in my part of the country. But they died out. I think it was that they lost their ambition. The tall ones were pretty crude, but they were so far ahead of us that our things and our customs seemed silly. Finally we just sat around and lived on what scraps we could beg from the tall ones' camps. You might say we died of an inferiority complex."

"What happened to you?" asked McGannon.

"Oh, I was a god among my own people by then, and naturally I represented them in dealings with the tall ones. I got to know the tall ones pretty well, and they were willing to put up with me after all my own clan were dead. Then in a couple of hundred years they'd forgotten all about my people, and took me for a hunchback or something. I got to be pretty good at flintworking, so I could earn my keep. When metal came in I went into that, and finally into blacksmithing. If you put all the horseshoes I've made in a pile, they'd—well, you'd have a damn big pile of horseshoes anyway."

"Did you limp at that time?" asked McGannon.

"Uh-huh. I busted my leg back in the Neolithic. Fell out of a tree, and had to set it myself, because there wasn't anybody around. Why?"

"Vulcan," said McGannon softly.

"Vulcan?" repeated the gnarly man. "Wasn't he a Greek god or something?"

"Yes. He was the lame blacksmith of the gods."

"You mean you think that maybe somebody got the idea from me? That's an interesting idea. Little late to check up on it, though."

Blue leaned forward, and said crisply, "Mr. Gaffney, no real Neanderthal man could talk as entertainingly as you do. That's shown by the poor development of the frontal lobes of the brain and the attachments of the tongue muscles."

The gnarly man shrugged again. "You can believe what you like. My own clan considered me pretty smart, and then you're bound to learn something in fifty thousand years."

Dr. Saddler said, "Tell them about your teeth, Clarence. "

The gnarly man grinned. "They're false, of course. My own lasted a long time, but they still wore out somewhere back in the Paleolithic. I grew a third set, and they wore out too. So I had to invent soup."

"You *what?*" It was the usually taciturn Jeffcott.

"I had to invent soup, to keep alive. You know, the bark-dish-and-hot-

stones method. My gums got pretty tough after a while, but they still weren't much good for chewing hard stuff. So after a few thousand years I got pretty sick of soup, and mushy foods generally. And when metal came in I began experimenting with false teeth. I finally made some pretty good ones. Amber teeth in copper plates. You might say I invented them too. I tried often to sell them, but they never really caught on until around 1750 AD. I was living in Paris then, and I built up quite a little business before I moved on." He pulled the handkerchief out of his breast pocket to wipe his forehead; Blue made a face as the wave of perfume reached him.

"Well, Mr. Caveman," snapped Blue sarcastically, "how do you like our machine age?"

The gnarly man ignored the tone of the question. "It's not bad. Lots of interesting things happen. The main trouble is the shirts."

"Shirts?"

"Uh-huh. Just try to buy a shirt with a 20 neck and a 29 sleeve. I have to order 'em special. It's almost as bad with hats and shoes. I wear an 8-1/2 hat and a 13 shoe." He looked at his watch. "I've got to get back to Coney to work."

McGannon jumped up. "Where can I get in touch with you again, Mr. Gaffney? There's lots of things I'd like to ask you."

The gnarly man told him, "I'm free mornings. My working hours are two to midnight on weekdays, with a couple of hours off for dinner. Union rules, you know."

"You mean there's a union for you show people?"

"Sure. Only they call it a guild. They think they're artists, you know."

Blue and Jeffcott watched the gnarly man and the historian walking slowly toward the subway together. Blue said, "Poor old Mac! I always thought he had sense. Looks like he's swallowed this Gaffney's ravings hook, line, and sinker."

"I'm not so sure," said Jeffcott, frowning. "There's something funny about the business."

"What?" barked Blue. "Don't tell me that *you* believe this story of being alive fifty thousand years? A caveman who uses perfume? Good God!"

"N-no," said Jeffcott. "Not the fifty thousand part. But I don't think it's a simple case of paranoia or plain lying either. And the perfume's quite logical, if he were telling the truth."

"Huh?"

"Body odor. Saddler told us how dogs hate him. He'd have a smell different from ours. We're so used to ours that we don't even know we have one, unless somebody goes without a bath for a couple of months. But we might notice his if he didn't disguise it."

Blue snorted. "You'll be believing him yourself in a minute. It's an obvious glandular case, and he's made up this story to fit. All that talk about not caring whether we believe him or not is just bluff. Come on, let's get some lunch. Say, did you see the way Saddler looked at him every time she said 'Clarence'? Wonder what she thinks she's going to do with him?"

Jeffcott thought. "I can guess. And if he *is* telling the truth, I think there's something in Deuteronomy against it."

The great surgeon made a point of looking like a great surgeon, to pince-nez and Vandyke. He waved the X-ray negatives at the gnarly man, pointing out this and that.

"We'd better take the leg first," he said. "Suppose we do that next Tuesday. When you've recovered from that we can tackle the shoulder."

The gnarly man agreed, and shuffled out of the little private hospital to where McGannon awaited him in his car. The gnarly man described the tentative schedule of operations, and mentioned that he had made arrangements to quit his job at the last minute. "Those two are the main things," he said. "I'd like to try professional wrestling again some day, and I can't unless I get this shoulder fixed so I can raise my left arm over my head."

"What happened to it?" asked McGannon.

The gnarly man closed his eyes, thinking. "Let me see. I get things mixed up sometimes. People do when they're only fifty years old, so you can imagine what it's like for me.

"In 42 B.C. I was living with the Bituriges in Gaul. You remember that Caesar shut up Werkinghetorich—Vercingetorix to you—in Alesia, and the confederacy raised an army of relief under Caswallon."

"Caswallon?"

The gnarly man laughed shortly. "I meant Wercaswallon. Caswallon was a Briton, wasn't he? I'm always getting those two mixed up.

"Anyhow, I got drafted. That's all you can call it; I didn't want to go. It wasn't exactly *my* war. But they wanted me because I could pull twice as heavy a bow as anybody else.

"When the final attack on Caesar's ring of fortifications came, they sent me forward with some other archers to provide a covering fire for their infantry. At least that was the plan. Actually I never saw such a hopeless muddle in my life. And before I even got within bowshot, I fell into one of the Romans' covered pits. I didn't land on the point of the stake, but I fetched up against the side of it and busted my shoulder. There wasn't any help, because the Gauls were too busy running away from Caesar's German cavalry to bother about wounded men."

The author of *God, Man, and the Universe* gazed after his departing pa-

tient. He spoke to his head assistant. "What do you think of him?"

"I think it's so," said the assistant. "I looked over those X-rays pretty closely. That skeleton never belonged to a human being."

"Hmm. Hmm," said Dunbar. "That's right, he wouldn't be human, would he? Hmm. You know, if anything happened to him—"

The assistant grinned understandingly. "Of course there's the S.P.C.A."

"We needn't worry about *them.* Hmm." He thought, you've been slipping: nothing big in the papers for a year. But if you published a complete anatomical description of a Neanderthal man—or if you found out why his medulla functions the way it does—hmm— "Of course it would have to be managed properly—"

"Let's have lunch at the Natural History Museum," said McGannon. "Some of the people there ought to know you."

"Okay," drawled the gnarly man. "Only I've still got to get back to Coney afterward. This is my last day. Tomorrow Pappas and I are going up to see our lawyer about ending our contract. It's a dirty trick on poor old John, but I warned him at the start that this might happen."

"I suppose we can come up to interview you while you're—ah—convalescing? Fine. Have you ever been to the Museum, by the way?"

"Sure," said the gnarly man. "I get around."

"What did you—ah—think of their stuff in the Hall of the Age of Man?"

"Pretty good. There's a little mistake in one of those big wall paintings. The second horn on the wooly rhinoceros ought to slant forward more. I thought about writing them a letter. But you know how it is. They say 'Were you there?' and I say 'Uh-huh' and they say 'Another nut.' "

"How about the pictures and busts of Paleolithic men?"

"Pretty good. But they have some funny ideas. They always show us with skins wrapped around our middles. In summer we didn't wear skins, and in winter we hung them around our shoulders where they'd do some good.

"And then they show those tall ones that you call Cro-Magnon men clean shaven. As I remember they all had whiskers. What would they shave with?"

"I think," said McGannon, "that they leave the beards off the busts to—ah—show the shape of the chins. With the beards they'd all look too much alike."

"Is that the reason? They might say so on the labels." The gnarly man rubbed his own chin, such as it was. "I wish beards would come back into style. I look much more human with a beard. I got along fine in the sixteenth century when everybody had whiskers.

"That's one of the ways I remember when things happened, by the haircuts and whiskers that people had. I remember when a wagon I was driving in Milan lost a wheel and spilled flour bags from hell to breakfast. That must

have been in the sixteenth century, before I went to Ireland, because I remember that most of the men in the crowd that collected had beards. Now—wait a minute—maybe that was the fourteenth. There were a lot of beards then too."

"Why, why didn't you keep a diary?" asked McGannon with a groan of exasperation.

The gnarly man shrugged characteristically. "And pack around six trunks full of paper every time I moved? No, thanks."

"I—ah—don't suppose you could give me the real story of Richard III and the princes in the Tower?"

"Why should I? I was just a poor blacksmith or farmer or something most of the time. I didn't go around with the big shots. I gave up all my ideas of ambition a long time before that. I had to, being so different from other people. As far as I can remember, the only real king I ever got a good look at was Charlemagne, when he made a speech in Paris one day. He was just a big tall man with a walrus mustache and a squeaky voice."

Next morning McGannon and the gnarly man had a session with Svedberg at the Museum, after which McGannon drove Gaffney around to the lawyer's office, on the third floor of a seedy old office building in the West Fifties. James Robinette looked something like a movie actor and something like a chipmunk. He glanced at his watch and said to McGannon: "This won't take long. If you'd like to stick around I'd be glad to have lunch with you." The fact was that he was feeling just a trifle queasy about being left with this damn queer client, this circus freak or whatever he was, with his barrel body and his funny slow drawl.

When the business had been completed, and the gnarly man had gone off with his manager to wind up his affairs at Coney, Robinette said, "Whew! I thought he was a halfwit, from his looks. But there was nothing halfwitted about the way he went over those clauses. You'd have thought the damn contract was for building a subway system. What is he, anyhow?"

McGannon told him what he knew.

The lawyer's eyebrows went up. "Do you *believe* his yarn?"

"I do. So does Saddler. So does Svedberg up at the Museum. They're both topnotchers in their respective fields. Saddler and I have interviewed him, and Svedberg's examined him physically. But it's just opinion. Fred Blue still swears it's a hoax or a case of some sort of dementia. Neither of us can prove anything."

"Why not?"

"Well—ah—how are you going to prove that he was or was not alive a hundred years ago? Take one case: Clarence says he ran a sawmill in Fairbanks, Alaska, in 1906 and '07, under the name of Michael Shawn. How are you going to find out whether there was a sawmill operator in Fairbanks at that

time? And if you did stumble on a record of a Michael Shawn, how would you know whether he and Clarence were the same? There's not a chance in a thousand that there'd be a photograph or a detailed description you could check with. And you'd have an awful time trying to find anybody who remembered him at this late date.

"Then, Svedberg poked around Clarence's face, and said that no human being ever had a pair of zygomatic arches like that. But when I told Blue that, he offered to produce photographs of a human skull that did. I know what'll happen: Blue will say that the arches are practically the same, and Svedberg will say that they're obviously different. So there we'll be."

Robinette mused, "He does seem damned intelligent for an ape-man."

"He's not an ape-man really. The Neanderthal race was a separate branch of the human stock; they were more primitive in some ways and more advanced in others than we are. Clarence may be slow, but he usually grinds out the right answer. I imagine that he was-—ah—brilliant, for one of his kind, to begin with. And he's had the benefit of so much experience. He knows us; he sees through us and our motives." The little pink man puckered up his forehead. "I do hope nothing happens to him. He's carrying around a lot of priceless information in that big head of his. Simply priceless. Not much about war and politics; he kept clear of those as a matter of self-preservation. But little things, about how people lived and how they thought thousands of years ago. He gets his periods mixed up sometimes, but he gets them straightened out if you give him time.

"I'll have to get hold of Pen, the linguist. Clarence knows dozens of ancient languages, such as Gothic and Gaulish. I was able to check him on some of them, like vulgar Latin; that was one of the things that convinced me. And there are archaeologists and psychologists . . .

"If only something doesn't happen to scare him off. We'd never find him. I don't know. Between a man-crazy female scientist and a publicity-mad surgeon, I wonder how it'll work out."

The gnarly man innocently entered the waiting room of Dunbar's hospital. He as usual spotted the most comfortable chair and settled luxuriously into it.

Dunbar stood before him. His keen eyes gleamed with anticipation behind their pince-nez. "There'll be a wait of about half an hour, Mr. Gaffney," he said. "We're all tied up now, you know. I'll send Mahler in; he'll see that you have anything you want." Dunbar's eyes ran lovingly over the gnarly man's stumpy frame. What fascinating secrets mightn't he discover once he got inside it?

Mahler appeared, a healthy-looking youngster. Was there anything Mr. Gaffney would like? The gnarly man paused as usual to let his massive mental machinery grind. A vagrant impulse moved him to ask to see the instruments that were to be used on him.

Mahler had his orders, but this seemed a harmless enough request. He went and returned with a tray full of gleaming steel. "You see," he said, "these are called scalpels."

Presently the gnarly man asked, "What's this?" He picked up a peculiar-looking instrument.

"Oh, that's the boss's own invention. For getting at the midbrain."

"Midbrain? What's that doing here?"

"Why, that's for getting at your—that must be there by mistake—"

Little lines tightened around the queer hazel eyes. "Yeah?" He remembered the look Dunbar had given him, and Dunbar's general reputation. "Say, could I use your phone a minute?"

"Why—I suppose—what do you want to phone for?"

"I want to call my lawyer. Any objections?"

"No, of course not. But there isn't any phone here."

"What do you call that?" The gnarly man rose and walked toward the instrument in plain sight on a table. But Mahler was there before him, standing in front of it.

"This one doesn't work. It's being fixed."

"Can't I try it?"

"No, not till it's fixed. It doesn't work, I tell you." The gnarly man studied the young physician for a few seconds. "Okay, then I'll find one that does." He started for the door.

"Hey, you can't go out now!" cried Mahler.

"Can't I? Just watch me!"

"Hey!" It was a full-throated yell. Like magic more men in white coats appeared. Behind them was the great surgeon. "Be reasonable, Mr. Gaffney," he said. "There's no reason why you should go out now, you know. We'll be ready for you in a little while."

"Any reason why I shouldn't?" The gnarly man's big face swung on his thick neck, and his hazel eyes swiveled. All the exits were blocked. "I'm going."

"Grab him!" said Dunbar.

The white coats moved. The gnarly man got his hands on the back of a chair. The chair whirled, and became a dissolving blur as the men closed on him. Pieces of chair flew about the room, to fall with the dry sharp *plink* of short lengths of wood. When the gnarly man stopped swinging, having only a short piece of the chair back left in each fist, one assistant was out cold. Another leaned whitely against the wall and nursed a broken arm.

"Go on!" shouted Dunbar when he could make himself heard. The white wave closed over the gnarly man, then broke. The gnarly man was on his feet, and held young Mahler by the ankles. He spread his feet and swung the shrieking Mahler like a club, clearing the way to the door. He turned, whirled Mahler

around his head like a hammer thrower, and let the now mercifully unconscious body fly. His assailants went down in a yammering tangle.

One was still up. Under Dunbar's urging he sprang after the gnarly man. The latter had gotten his stick out of the umbrella stand in the vestibule. The knobby upper end went *whoowh* past the assistant's nose. The assistant jumped back and fell over one of the casualties.

The front door slammed, and there was a deep roar of "Taxi!"

"Come on!" shrieked Dunbar. "Get the ambulance out!"

James Robinette sat in his office on the third floor of a seedy old office building in the West Fifties, thinking the thoughts that lawyers do in moments of relaxation.

He wondered about that damn queer client, that circus freak or whatever he was, who had been in a couple of days before with his manager. A barrel-bodied man who looked like a halfwit and talked in a funny slow drawl. Though there had been nothing halfwitted about the acute way he had gone over those clauses.

There was a pounding of large feet in the corridor, a startled protest from Miss Spevak in the outer office, and the strange customer was before Robinette's desk, breathing bard.

"I'm Gaffney," he growled between gasps. "Remember me? I think they followed me down here. They'll be up any minute. I want your help."

"They? Who's they?" Robinette winced at the impact of that damned perfume.

The gnarly man launched into his misfortunes. He was going well when there were more protests from Miss Spevak, and Dr. Dunbar and four assistants burst into the office.

"He's ours," said Dunbar, his glasses agleam.

"He's an ape-man," said the assistant with the black eye.

"He's a dangerous lunatic," said the assistant with the cut lip.

"We've come to take him away," said the assistant with the torn pants.

The gnarly man spread his feet and gripped his stick like a baseball bat, by the small end.

Robinette opened a desk drawer and got out a large pistol. "One move toward him and I'll use this. The use of extreme violence is justified to prevent commission of a felony, to wit, kidnapping."

The five men backed up a little. Dunbar said, "This isn't kidnapping. You can only kidnap a person, you know. He isn't a human being, and I can prove it."

The assistant with the black eye snickered. "If he wants protection, he better see a game warden instead of a lawyer."

"Maybe that's what *you* think," said Robinette. "You aren't a lawyer. Ac-

cording to the law he's human. Even corporations, idiots, and unborn children are legally persons, and he's a damn sight more human than they are."

"Then he's a dangerous lunatic," said Dunbar.

"Yeah? Where's your commitment order? The only persons who can apply for one are (a) close relatives and (b) public officials charged with the maintenance of order. You're neither."

Dunbar continued stubbornly. "He ran amuck in my hospital and nearly killed a couple of my men, you know. I guess that gives us some rights."

"Sure," said Robinette. "You can step down to the nearest station and swear out a warrant." He turned to the gnarly man. "Shall we slap a civil suit on 'em, Gaffney?"

"I'm all right," said the individual, his speech returning to its normal slowness. "I just want to make sure these guys don't pester me anymore."

"Okay. Now listen, Dunbar. One hostile move out of you and we'll have a warrant out for you for false arrest, assault and battery, attempted kidnapping, criminal conspiracy, and disorderly conduct. We'll throw the book at you. *And* there'll be a suit for damages for sundry torts, to wit, assault, deprivation of civil rights, placing in jeopardy of life and limb, menace, and a few more I may think of later."

"You'll never make that stick," snarled Dunbar. "We have all the witnesses."

"Yeah? And wouldn't the great Evan Dunbar look sweet defending such actions? Some of the ladies who gush over your books might suspect that maybe you weren't such a damn knight in shining armor. We can make a prize monkey of you, and you know it."

"You're destroying the possibility of a great scientific discovery, you know, Robinette."

"To hell with that. My duty is to protect my client. Now beat it, all of you, before I call a cop." His left hand moved suggestively to the telephone.

Dunbar grasped at a last straw. "Hmm. Have you got a permit for that gun?"

"Damn right. Want to see it?"

Dunbar sighed. "Never mind. You *would* have." His greatest opportunity for fame was slipping out of his fingers. He drooped toward the door.

The gnarly man spoke up. "If you don't mind, Dr. Dunbar. I left my hat at your place. I wish you'd send it to Mr. Robinette here. I have a hard time getting hats to fit me."

Dunbar looked at him silently and left with his cohorts.

The gnarly man was giving the lawyer further details when the telephone rang. Robinette answered: "Yes. . . Saddler? Yes, he's here. . . Your Dr. Dunbar was going to murder him so he could dissect him . . . Okay." He turned to the gnarly man. "Your friend Dr. Saddler is looking for you. She's on her way up here."

"Herakles!" said Gaffney. "I'm going."

"Don't you want to see her? She was phoning from around the corner. If you go out now you'll run into her. How did she know where to call?"

"I gave her your number. I suppose she called the hospital and my boarding house, and tried you as a last resort. This door goes into the hall, doesn't it? Well, when she comes in the regular door I'm going out this one. And I don't want you saying where I've gone. Nice to have known you, Mr. Robinette."

"Why? What's the matter? You're not going to run out now, are you? Dunbar's harmless, and you've got friends. I'm your friend."

"You're durn tootin' I'm gonna run out. There's too much trouble. I've kept alive all these centuries by staying away from trouble. I let down my guard with Dr. Saddler, and went to the surgeon she recommended. First he plots to take me apart to see what makes me tick. If that brain instrument hadn't made me suspicious I'd have been on my way to the alcohol jars by now. Then there's a fight, and it's just pure luck I didn't kill a couple of those interns or whatever they are and get sent up for manslaughter. Now Matilda's after me with a more than friendly interest. I know what it means when a woman looks at you that way and calls you 'dear.' I wouldn't mind if she weren't a prominent person of the kind that's always in some sort of garboil. That would mean more trouble sooner or later. You don't suppose I *like* trouble, do you?"

"But look here, Gaffney, you're getting steamed up over a lot of damn—"

"Sssh!" The gnarly man took his stick and tiptoed over to the private entrance. As Dr. Saddler's clear voice sounded in the outer office, he sneaked out. He was closing the door behind him when the scientist entered the inner office.

Matilda Saddler was a quick thinker. Robinette hardly had time to open his mouth when she flung herself at and through the private door with a cry of "Clarence!"

Robinette heard the clatter of feet on the stairs. Neither the pursued nor the pursuer had waited for the creaky elevator. Looking out the window he saw Gaffney leap into a taxi. Matilda Saddler sprinted after the cab, calling, "Clarence! Come back!" But the traffic was light and the chase correspondingly hopeless.

They did hear from the gnarly man once more. Three months later Robinette got a letter whose envelope contained, to his vast astonishment, ten ten-dollar bills. The single sheet was typed even to the signature.

> Dear Mr. Robinette:
>
> I do not know what your regular fees are, but I hope that the enclosed will cover your services to me of last July.
>
> Since leaving New York I have had several jobs. I pushed a hack (as we say) in Chicago, and I tried out as pitcher on a bush-

league baseball team. Once I made my living by knocking over rabbits and things with stones, and I can still throw fairly well. Nor am I bad at swinging a club like a baseball bat. But my lameness makes me too slow for a baseball career.

I now have a job whose nature I cannot disclose because I do not wish to be traced. You need pay no attention to the postmark; I am not living in Kansas City, but had a friend post this letter there.

Ambition would be foolish for one in my peculiar position. I am satisfied with a job that furnishes me with the essentials and allows me to go to an occasional movie, and a few friends with whom I can drink beer and talk.

I was sorry to leave New York without saying good-bye to Dr. Harold McGannon, who treated me very nicely. I wish you would explain to him why I had to leave as I did. You can get in touch with him through Columbia University.

If Dunbar sent you my hat as I requested, please mail it to me, General Delivery, Kansas City, Mo. My friend will pick it up. There is not a hat store in this town where I live that can fit me.

With best wishes, I remain,

Yours sincerely,
Shining Hawk
alias Clarence Aloysius Gaffney

Reward of Virtue

Sir Gilbert de Vere was a virtuous knight;
He succored the weak and he fought for the right
But cherished a goal that he never could sight:
He wanted a dragon to fight.

He prayed all the night and he prayed all the day
That God would provide him a dragon to slay;
And God heard his prayer and considered a way
To furnish Sir Gilbert his prey.

And so, to comply with Sir Gilbert's demand
But having no genuine dragons to hand,
God whisked him away to an earlier land,
With destrier, armor, and brand.

And in the Cretaceous, Sir Gilbert de Vere
Discovered a fifty-foot carnosaur near.
He dug in his spurs and he leveled his spear
And charged without a flicker of fear.

The point struck a rib, and the lance broke in twain;
The knight clapped a hand to his hilt, but in vain:
The dinosaur swallowed that valorous thane,
And gallant Sir Gilbert was slain.

The iron apparel he wore for his ride,
However, was rough on the reptile's inside.
That dinosaur presently lay down and died,
And honor was thus satisfied.

But Gilbert no longer was present to care;
So pester not God with your wishes. Beware!
What happens when Heaven has answered your prayer
Is your, and no other's affair!

A Gun for Dinosaur

No, I'm sorry, Mr. Seligman; but I can't take you hunting late-Mesozoic dinosaur.

Yes, I know what the advertisement says.

Why not? How much d'you weigh? Fifty-four kilos? Let's see; that's under sixty kilos, which is my lower limit.

I could take you to other periods, you know. I'll take you to any period in the Cenozoic. I'll get you a shot at an entelodont or a uintathere. They've got fine heads. I'll even stretch a point and take you to the Pleistocene, where you can try for one of the mammoths or the mastodon.

I'll take you back to the Triassic, where you can shoot one of the smaller ancestral dinosaurs. But I will bloody well not take you to the Jurassic or the Cretaceous. You're just too small.

What's your size got to do with it? Look here, mate, what did you think you were going to shoot your dinosaur with?

Oh, you hadn't thought, eh?

Well, sit there a minute . . . Here you are: my own private gun for that work, a Continental .600. Does look like a shotgun, doesn't it? But it's rifled, as you can see by looking through the barrels. Shoots a pair of .600 Nitro Express cartridges the size of bananas; weighs nearly seven kilos and has a muzzle energy of over twenty-two hundred KGMs. Costs twenty thousand dollars. Lot of money for a gun, eh?

I have some spares we rent to the sahibs. Designed for knocking down elephant. Not just wounding them, knocking them base-over-apex. That's why they don't make guns like this in America, though I suppose they will if hunting parties keep going back in time.

Now, I've been guiding hunting parties for twenty years. Guided 'em in Africa until the game gave out there except on the preserves. And all that time I've never known a bloke your size who could handle the six-nought-nought.

It knocks 'em over, and even when they stay on their feet they get so scared of the bloody cannon after a few shots that they flinch. And they find the gun too heavy to drag around rough Mesozoic country. Wears 'em out.

It's true that lots of people have killed elephant with lighter guns: the .500, .475, and .465 doubles, for instance, or even .375 magnum repeaters. The difference is, with a .375 you have to hit something vital, preferably the heart, and can't depend on simple shock power.

An elephant weighs—let's see—four to six tons. You're proposing to shoot reptiles weighing two or three times as much as an elephant and with much greater tenacity of life. That's why the syndicate decided to take no more people dinosaur hunting unless they could handle the .600. We learned the hard way, as you Americans say. There were some unfortunate incidents . . .

I'll tell you, Mr. Seligman. It's after seventeen-hundred. Time I closed the office. Why don't we stop at the bar on our way out while I tell you the story?

. . . It was about the Raja's and my fifth safari into time. The Raja? Oh, he's the Aiyar half of Rivers and Aiyar. I call him the Raja because he's the hereditary monarch of Janpur. Means nothing nowadays, of course. Knew him in India and ran into him in New York running the Indian tourist agency. That dark chap in the photograph on my office wall, the one with his foot on the dead sabertooth.

Well, the Raja was fed up with handing out brochures about the Taj Mahal and wanted to do a bit of hunting again. I was at loose ends when we heard of Professor Prochaska's time machine at Washington University.

Where's the Raja now? Out on safari, in the Early Oligocene after titanothere, while I run the office. We take turn about, but the first few times we went out together.

Anyhow, we caught the next plane to St. Louis. To our mortification, we found we weren't the first. Lord, no! There were other hunting guides and no end of scientists, each with his own idea of the right way to use the machine.

We scraped off the historians and archeologists right at the start. Seems the bloody machine won't work for periods more recent than 100,000 years ago. It works from there up to about a billion years.

Why? Oh, I'm no four-dimensional thinker; but, as I understand it, if people could go back to a more recent time, their actions would affect our own history, which would be a paradox or contradiction of facts. Can't have that in a well-run universe, you know.

But, before 100,000 BC, more or less, the actions of the expeditions are lost in the stream of time before human history begins. At that, once a stretch of past time has been used, say the month of January, one million BC, you can't use that stretch over again by sending another party into it. Paradoxes again.

The professor isn't worried, though. With a billion years to exploit, he won't soon run out of eras.

Another limitation of the machine is the matter of size. For technical reasons, Prochaska had to build the transition chamber just big enough to hold four men with their personal gear, and the chamber wallah. Larger parties have to be sent through in relays. That means, you see, it's not practical to take jeeps, launches, aircraft, and other powered vehicles.

On the other hand, since you're going to periods without human beings, there's no whistling up a hundred native bearers to trot along with your gear on their heads. So we usually take a train of asses—burros, they call them here. Most periods have enough natural forage so you can get where you want to go.

As I say, everybody had his own idea for using the machine. The scientists looked down their noses at us hunters and said it would be a crime to waste the machine's time pandering to our sadistic amusements.

We brought up another angle. The machine cost a cool thirty million. I understand this came from the Rockefeller Board and such people, but that accounted for the original cost only, not the cost of operation. And the thing uses fantastic amounts of power. Most of the scientists' projects, while worthy enough, were run on a shoestring, financially speaking.

Now, we guides catered to people with money, a species with which America seems well stocked. No offense, old boy. Most of these could afford a substantial fee for passing through the machine into the past. Thus we could help finance the operation of the machine for scientific purposes, provided we got a fair share of its time. In the end, the guides formed a syndicate, one member being the partnership of Rivers and Aiyar, to apportion the machine's time.

We had rush business from the start. Our wives—the Raja's and mine—raised hell with us for a while. They'd hoped that, when the big game gave out in our own era, they'd never have to share us with lions and things again, but you know how women are. Hunting's not really dangerous if you keep your head and take precautions.

On the fifth expedition, we had two sahibs to wet-nurse; both Americans in their thirties, both physically sound, and both solvent. Otherwise they were as different as different can be.

Courtney James was what you chaps call a playboy: a rich young man from New York who'd always had his own way and didn't see why that agreeable condition shouldn't continue. A big bloke, almost as big as I am; handsome in a florid way, but beginning to run to fat. He was on his fourth wife and, when he showed up at the office with a blond twist with "model" written all over her, I assumed that this was the fourth Mrs. James.

"Miss Bartram," she corrected me, with an embarrassed giggle.

"She's not my wife," James explained. "My wife is in Mexico, I think, getting a divorce. But Bunny here would like to go along—"

"Sorry," I said, "we don't take ladies. At least, not to the Late Mesozoic."

This wasn't strictly true, but I felt we were running enough risks, going after a little-known fauna, without dragging in people's domestic entanglements. Nothing against sex, you understand. Marvelous institution and all that, but not where it interferes with my living.

"Oh, nonsense!" said James. "If she wants to go, she'll go. She skis and flies my airplane, so why shouldn't she—"

"Against the firm's policy," I said.

"She can keep out of the way when we run up against the dangerous ones," he said.

"No, sorry."

"Damn it!" said he, getting red. "After all, I'm paying you a goodly sum, and I'm entitled to take whoever I please."

"You can't hire me to do anything against my best judgment," I said. "If that's how you feel, get another guide."

"All right, I will," he said. "And I'll tell all my friends you're a God-damned—" Well, he said a lot of things I won't repeat, until I told him to get out of the office or I'd throw him out.

I was sitting in the office and thinking sadly of all that lovely money James would have paid me if I hadn't been so stiff-necked, when in came my other lamb, one August Holtzinger. This was a little slim pale chap with glasses, polite and formal. Holtzinger sat on the edge of his chair and said:

"Uh—Mr. Rivers, I don't want you to think I'm here under false pretences. I'm really not much of an outdoorsman, and I'll probably be scared to death when I see a real dinosaur. But I'm determined to hang a dinosaur head over my fireplace or die in the attempt."

"Most of us are frightened at first," I soothed him, "though it doesn't do to show it." And little by little I got the story out of him.

While James had always been wallowing in the stuff, Holtzinger was a local product who'd only lately come into the real thing. He'd had a little business here in St. Louis and just about made ends meet when an uncle cashed in his chips somewhere and left little Augie the pile.

Now Holtzinger had acquired a fiancee and was building a big house. When it was finished, they'd be married and move into it. And one furnishing he demanded was a ceratopsian head over the fireplace. Those are the ones with the big domed heads with a parrot's beak and a frill over the neck, you know. You have to think twice about collecting them, because, if you put a two-meter *Triceratops* head into a small living room, there's apt to be no room left for anything else.

We were talking about this when in came a girl: a small girl in her twenties,

quite ordinary-looking, and crying.

"Augie!" she cried. "You can't! You mustn't! You'll be killed!" She grabbed him round the knees and said to me:

"Mr. Rivers, you mustn't take him! He's all I've got! He'll never stand the hardships!"

"My dear young lady," I said, "I should hate to cause you distress, but it's up to Mr. Holtzinger to decide whether he wishes to retain my services."

"It's no use, Claire," said Holtzinger. "I'm going, though I'll probably hate every minute of it."

"What's that, old boy?" I said. "If you hate it, why go? Did you lose a bet, or something?"

"No," said Holtzinger. "It's this way. Uh—I'm a completely undistinguished kind of guy. I'm not brilliant or big or strong or handsome. I'm just an ordinary Midwestern small businessman. You never even notice me at Rotary luncheons, I fit in so perfectly.

"But that doesn't say I'm satisfied. I've always hankered to go to far places and do big things. I'd like to be a glamorous, adventurous sort of guy. Like you, Mr. Rivers."

"Oh, come," I said. "Professional hunting may seem glamorous to you, but to me it's just a living."

He shook his head. "Nope. You know what I mean. Well, now I've got this legacy, I could settle down to play bridge and golf the rest of my life, and try to act like I wasn't bored. But I'm determined to do something with some color in it, once at least. Since there's no more real big-game hunting in the present, I'm gonna shoot a dinosaur and hang his head over my mantel if it's the last thing I do. I'll never be happy otherwise."

Well, Holtzinger and his girl argued, but he wouldn't give in. She made me swear to take the best care of her Augie and departed, sniffling.

When Holtzinger had left, who should come in but my vile-tempered friend Courtney James? He apologized for insulting me, though you could hardly say he groveled.

"I don't really have a bad temper," he said, "except when people won't cooperate with me. Then I sometimes get mad. But so long as they're cooperative I'm not hard to get along with."

I knew that by "cooperate" he meant to do whatever Courtney James wanted, but I didn't press the point. "How about Miss Bartram?" I asked.

"We had a row," he said. "I'm through with women. So, if there's no hard feelings, let's go on from where we left off."

"Very well," I said, business being business.

The Raja and I decided to make it a joint safari to eighty-five million years ago: The Early Upper Cretaceous, or the Middle Cretaceous as some American geologists call it. It's about the best period for dinosaur in Missouri. You'll

find some individual species a little larger in the Late Upper Cretaceous, but the period we were going to gives a wider variety.

Now, as to our equipment: The Raja and I each had a Continental .600, like the one I showed you, and a few smaller guns. At this time we hadn't worked up much capital and had no spare .600s to rent.

August Holtzinger said he would rent a gun, as he expected this to be his only safari, and there's no point in spending twenty thousand dollars for a gun you'll shoot only a few times. But, since we had no spare .600s, his choice lay between buying one of those and renting one of our smaller pieces.

We drove into the country and set up a target, to let him try the .600. Holtzinger heaved up the gun and let fly. He missed completely, and the kick knocked him flat on his back.

He got up, looking paler than ever, and handed me back the gun, saying: "Uh—I think I'd better try something smaller."

When his shoulder stopped hurting, I tried him out on the smaller rifles. He took a fancy to my Winchester 70, chambered for the .375 magnum cartridge. This is an excellent all-round gun—perfect for the big cats and bears, but a little light for elephant and definitely light for dinosaur. I should never have given in, but I was in a hurry, and it might have taken months to have a new .600 made to order for him. James already had a gun, a Holland & Holland .500 double express, which is almost in a class with the .600.

Both sahibs had done a bit of shooting, so I didn't worry about their accuracy. Shooting dinosaur is not a matter of extreme accuracy, but of sound judgment and smooth co-ordination so you shan't catch twigs in the mechanism of your gun, or fall into holes, or climb a small tree that the dinosaur can pluck you out of, or blow your guide's head off.

People used to hunting mammals sometimes try to shoot a dinosaur in the brain. That's the silliest thing you can do, because dinosaur haven't got any. To be exact, they have a little lump of tissue the size of a tennis ball on the front end of their spines, and how are you going to hit that when it's imbedded in a two-meter skull?

The only safe rule with dinosaur is: always try for a heart shot. They have big hearts, over fifty kilos in the largest species, and a couple of .600 slugs through the heart will slow them up, at least. The problem is to get the slugs through that mountain of meat around it.

Well, we appeared at Prochaska's laboratory one rainy morning: James and Holtzinger, the Raja and I, our herder Beauregard Black, three helpers, a cook, and twelve jacks.

The transition chamber is a little cubbyhole the size of a small lift. My routine is for the men with the guns to go first, in case a hungry theropod is

standing near the machine when it arrives. So the two sahibs, the Raja, and I crowded into the chamber with our guns and packs. The operator squeezed in after us, closed the door, and fiddled with his dials. He set the thing for April twenty-fourth, eighty-five million B.C., and pressed the red button. The lights went out, leaving the chamber lit by a little battery-operated lamp. James and Holtzinger looked pretty green, but that may have been the lighting. The Raja and I had been through all this before, so the vibration and vertigo didn't bother us.

The little spinning black hands of the dials slowed down and stopped. The operator looked at his ground level gauge and turned the handwheel that raised the chamber so it shouldn't materialize underground. Then he pressed another button, and the door slid open.

No matter how often I do it, I get a frightful thrill out of stepping into a bygone era. The operator had raised the chamber just above ground level, so I jumped down, my gun ready. The others came after.

"Right-ho," I said to the chamber wallah, and he closed the door. The chamber disappeared, and we looked around. There weren't any dinosaur in sight, nothing but lizards.

In this period, the chamber materializes on top of a rocky rise, from which you can see in all directions as far as the haze will let you. To the west, you see the arm of the Kansas Sea that reaches across Missouri and the big swamp around the bayhead where the sauropods live.

To the north is a low range that the Raja named the Janpur Hills, after the Indian kingdom his forebears once ruled. To the east, the land slopes up to a plateau, good for ceratopsians, while to the south is flat country with more sauropod swamps and lots of ornithopod: duckbill and iguanodont.

The finest thing about the Cretaceous is the climate: balmy, like the South Sea Islands, but not so muggy as most Jurassic climates. It was spring, with dwarf magnolias in bloom all over.

A thing about this landscape is that it combines a fairly high rainfall with an open type of vegetation cover. That is, the grasses hadn't yet evolved to the point of forming solid carpets over all the open ground. So the ground is thick with laurel, sassafras, and other shrubs, with bare earth between. There are big thickets of palmettos and ferns. The trees round the hill are mostly cycads, standing singly and in copses. You'd call 'em palms. Down towards the Kansas Sea are more cycads and willows, while the uplands are covered with screw pine and ginkgoes.

Now, I'm no bloody poet—the Raja writes the stuff, not me—but I can appreciate a beautiful scene. One of the helpers had come through the machine with two of the jacks and was pegging them out, and I was looking through the haze and sniffing the air, when a gun went off behind me—*bang! bang!*

I whirled round, and there was Courtney James with his .500, and an ornithomime legging it for cover fifty meters away. The ornithomimes are medium-sized running dinosaurs, slender things with long necks and legs, like a cross between a lizard and an ostrich. This kind is over two meters tall and weighs as much as a man. The beggar had wandered out of the nearest copse, and James gave him both barrels. Missed.

I was upset, as trigger-happy sahibs are as much a menace to their party as theropods. I yelled: "Damn it, you idiot! I thought you weren't to shoot without a word from me?"

"And who the hell are you, to tell me when I'll shoot my own gun?" he said.

We had a rare old row until Holtzinger and the Raja got us calmed down. I explained:

"Look here, Mr. James, I've got reasons. If you shoot off all your ammunition before the trip's over, your gun won't be available in a pinch, as it's the only one of its caliber. If you empty both barrels at an unimportant target, what would happen if a big theropod charged before you could reload? Finally, it's not sporting to shoot everything in sight, just to hear the gun go off. Do you understand?"

"Yeah, I guess so," he said.

The rest of the party came through the machine, and we pitched our camp a safe distance from the materializing place. Our first task was to get fresh meat. For a twenty-one-day safari like this, we calculate our food requirements closely, so we can make out on tinned stuff and concentrates if we must, but we count on killing at least one piece of meat. When that's butchered, we go off on a short tour, stopping at four or five camping places to hunt and arriving back at base a few days before the chamber is due to appear.

Holtzinger, as I said, wanted a ceratopsian head, any kind. James insisted on just one head: a tyrannosaur. Then everybody'd think he'd shot the most dangerous game of all time.

Fact is, the tyrannosaur's overrated. He's more a carrion eater than an active predator, though he'll snap you up if he gets the chance. He's less dangerous than some of the other theropods—the flesh eaters, you know—such as the smaller *Gorgosaurus* from the period we were in. But everybody's read about the tyrant lizard, and he does have the biggest head of the theropods.

The one in our period isn't the *rex*, which is later and a bit bigger and more specialized. It's the *trionyches*, with the fore-limbs not quite so reduced, though they're still too small for anything but picking the brute's teeth after a meal.

When camp was pitched, we still had the afternoon. So the Raja and I took our sahibs on their first hunt. We had a map of the local terrain from previous trips.

The Raja and I have worked out a system for dinosaur hunting. We split into two groups of two men each and walk parallel from twenty to forty meters apart. Each group had a sahib in front and a gŭide following and telling him where to go. We tell the sahibs we put them in front so they shall have the first shot. Well, that's true, but another reason is they're always tripping and falling with their guns cocked, and if the guide were in front he'd get shot.

The reason for two groups is that, if a dinosaur starts for one, the other gets a good heart shot from the side.

As we walked, there was the usual rustle of lizards scuttling out of the way: little fellows, quick as a flash and colored like all the jewels in Tiffany's, and big gray ones that hiss at you as they plod off. There were tortoises and a few little snakes. Birds with beaks full of teeth flapped off squawking. And always there was that marvelous mild Cretaceous air. Makes a chap want to take his clothes off and dance with vine leaves in his hair, if you know what I mean.

Our sahibs soon found that Mesozoic country is cut up into millions of nullahs—gullies, you'd say. Walking is one long scramble, up and down, up and down.

We'd been scrambling for an hour, and the sahibs were soaked with sweat and had their tongues hanging out, when the Raja whistled. He'd spotted a group of bonehead feeding on cycad shoots.

These are the pachycephalosaurs, small ornithopods about the size of men with a bulge on top of their heads that makes them look almost intelligent. Means nothing, because the bulge is solid bone. The males butt each other with these heads in fighting over the females.

These chaps would drop down on all fours, munch up a shoot, then stand up and look around. They're warier than most dinosaur, because they're the favorite food of the big theropods.

People sometimes assume that, because dinosaur are so stupid, their senses must be dim, too. But it's not so. Some, like the sauropods, are pretty dim-sensed, but most have good smell and eyesight and fair hearing. Their weakness is that, having hardly any minds, they have little memories. Hence, out of sight, out of mind. When a big theropod comes slavering after you, your best defense is to hide in a nullah or behind a bush, and if he can neither see you nor smell you he'll just wander off.

We skulked up behind a patch of palmetto downwind from the bonehead. I whispered to James:

"You've had a shot already today. Hold your fire until Holtzinger shoots, and then shoot only if he misses or if the beast is getting away wounded."

"Uh-huh," said James.

We separated, he with the Raja and Holtzinger with me. This got to be our regular arrangement. James and I got on each other's nerves, but the Raja's a friendly, sentimental sort of bloke nobody can help liking.

We crawled round the palmetto patch on opposite sides, and Holtzinger got up to shoot. You daren't shoot a heavy-caliber rifle prone. There's not enough give, and the kick can break your shoulder.

Holtzinger sighted round the last few fronds of palmetto. I saw his barrel wobbling and waving. Then he lowered his gun and tucked it under his arm to wipe his glasses.

Off went James's gun, both barrels again.

The biggest bonehead went down, rolling and thrashing. The others ran away on their hindlegs in great leaps, their heads jerking and their tails sticking up behind.

"Put your gun on safety," I said to Holtzinger, who'd started forward. By the time we got to the bonehead, James was standing over it, breaking open his gun and blowing out the barrels. He looked as smug as if he'd come into another million and was asking the Raja to take his picture with his foot on the game.

I said: "I thought you were to give Holtzinger the first shot?"

"Hell, I waited," he said, "and he took so long I thought he must have gotten buck fever. If we stood around long enough, they'd see us or smell us."

There was something in what he said, but his way of saying it put my monkey up. I said: "If that sort of thing happens once more, we'll leave you in camp the next time we go out."

"Now, gentlemen," said the Raja. "After all, Reggie, these aren't experienced hunters."

"What now?" said Holtzinger. "Haul him back ourselves or send out the men?"

"We'll sling him under the pole," I said. "He weighs under one hundred kilos,"

The pole was a telescoping aluminium carrying pole I had in my pack, with padded yokes on the ends. I brought it because, in such eras, you can't count on finding saplings strong enough for proper poles on the spot.

The Raja and I cleaned our bonehead, to lighten him, and tied him to the pole. The flies began to light on the offal by thousands. Scientists say they're not true flies in the modern sense, but they look and act like flies. There's one huge four-winged carrion fly that flies with a distinctive deep thrumming note.

The rest of the afternoon we sweated under that pole, taking turn about. The lizards scuttled out of the way, and the flies buzzed round the carcass.

We got to camp just before sunset, feeling as if we could eat the whole bonehead at one meal. The boys had the camp running smoothly, so we sat down for our tot of whiskey feeling like lords of creation, while the cook broiled bonehead steaks.

Holtzinger said: "Uh—if I kill a ceratopsian, how do we get his head back?"

I explained: "If the ground permits, we lash it to the patent aluminium roller frame and sled it in."

"How much does a head like that weigh?" he asked.

"Depends on the age and the species," I told him. "The biggest weigh over a ton, but most run between two and five hundred kilos."

"And all the ground's rough like it was today?"

"Most of it," I said. "You see, it's the combination of the open vegetation cover and the moderately high rainfall. Erosion is frightfully rapid."

"And who hauls the head on its little sled?"

"Everybody with a hand," I said. "A big head would need every ounce of muscle in this party. On such a job there's no place for side."

"Oh," said Holtzinger. I could see he was wondering whether a ceratopsian head would be worth the effort.

The next couple of days we trekked round the neighborhood. Nothing worth shooting; only a herd of ornithomimes, which went bounding off like a lot of ballet dancers. Otherwise there were only the usual lizards and pterosaurs and birds and insects. There's a big lace-winged fly that bites dinosaurs; so, as you can imagine, its beak makes nothing of a human skin. One made Holtzinger leap and dance like a Red Indian when it bit him through his shirt. James joshed him about it, saying:

"What's all the fuss over one little bug?"

The second night, during the Raja's watch, James gave a yell that brought us all out of our tents with rifles. All that had happened was that a dinosaur tick had crawled in with him and started drilling under his armpit. Since it's as big as your thumb even when it hasn't fed, he was understandably startled. Luckily he got it before it had taken its pint of blood. He'd pulled Holtzinger's leg pretty hard about the fly bite, so now Holtzinger repeated the words:

"What's all the fuss over one little bug, buddy?"

James squashed the tick underfoot with a grunt, not much liking to be hoist by his own what-d'you-call-it.

We packed up and started on our circuit. We meant to take the sahibs first to the sauropod swamp, more to see the wildlife than to collect anything.

From where the transition chamber materializes, the sauropod swamp looks like a couple of hours' walk, but it's really an all-day scramble. The first part is easy, as it's downhill and the brush isn't heavy. Then, as you get near the swamp, the cycads and willows grow so thickly that you have to worm and hack your way among them.

I led the party to a sandy ridge on the border of the swamp, as it was pretty bare of vegetation and afforded a fine view. When we got to the ridge, the sun was about to go down. A couple of crocs slipped off into the water. The sahibs were so tired that they dropped down in the sand as if dead.

The haze is thick round the swamp, so the sun was deep red and weirdly distorted by the atmospheric layers. There was a high layer of clouds reflecting the red and gold of the sun, too, so altogether it was something for the Raja to

write one of his poems about. A few little pterosaurs were wheeling overhead like bats.

Beauregard Black got a fire going. We'd started on our steaks, and that pagoda-shaped sun was just slipping below the horizon, and something back in the trees was making a noise like a rusty hinge, when a sauropod breathed out in the water. They're the really big ones, you know. If Mother Earth were to sigh over the misdeeds of her children, it would sound like that. The sahibs jumped up, shouting: "Where is he? Where is he?"

I said: "That black spot in the water, just to the left of that point."

They yammered while the sauropod filled its lungs and disappeared. "Is that all?" said James. "Won't we see any more of him?"

Holtzinger said: "I read that they never come out of the water because they're too heavy to walk."

"No," I explained. "They can walk perfectly well and often do, for egg-laying and moving from one swamp to another. But much of the time they spend in the water, like hippopotamus. They eat hundreds of kilos of soft swamp plants a day, all through those little heads. So they wander about lakes and swamps, chomping away, and stick their heads up to breathe every quarter-hour or so. It's getting dark, so this fellow will soon come out and lie down in the shallows to sleep."

"Can we shoot one?" demanded James.

"I wouldn't," said I.

"Why not?"

I said: "There's no point in it, and it's not sporting. First, they're almost invulnerable. They're even harder to hit in the brain than other dinosaurs because of the way they sway their heads about on those long necks. Their hearts are too deeply buried to reach unless you're awfully lucky. Then, if you kill one in the water, he sinks and can't be recovered. If you kill one on land, the only trophy is that little head. You can't bring the whole beast back because he weighs thirty ton or more, and we've got no use for thirty tons of meat."

Holtzinger said: "That museum in New York got one."

"Yes," said I. "The American Museum of Natural History sent a party of forty-eight to the Early Cretaceous, with a fifty-caliber machine gun. They killed a sauropod and spent two solid months skinning it and hacking the carcass apart and dragging it to the time machine. I know the chap in charge of that project, and he still has nightmares in which he smells decomposing dinosaur. They had to kill a dozen big theropods attracted by the stench, so they had them lying around and rotting, too. And the theropods ate three men of the party despite the big gun."

Next morning, we were finishing breakfast when one of the helpers said: "Look, Mr. Rivers, up there!"

He pointed along the shore line. There were six big crested duckbill, feeding in the shallows. They were the kind called *Parasaurolophus,* with a long spike sticking out the back of their heads and a web of skin connecting this with the back of their necks.

"Keep your voices down!" I said. The duckbill, like the other ornithopods, are wary beasts because they have neither armor nor weapons. They feed on the margins of lakes and swamps, and when a gorgosaur rushes out of the trees they plunge into deep water and swim off. Then when *Phobosuchus,* the supercrocodile, goes for them in the water, they flee to the land. A hectic sort of life, eh?

Holtzinger said: "Uh—Reggie! I've been thinking over what you said about ceratopsian heads. If I could get one of those yonder, I'd be satisfied. It would look big enough in my house, wouldn't it?"

"I'm sure of it, old boy," I said. "Now look here. We could detour to come out on the shore near here, but we should have to plow through half a mile of muck and brush, and they'd hear us coming. Or we can creep up to the north end of this sandspit, from which it's three or four hundred meters—a long shot, but not impossible. Think you could do it?"

"Hm," said Holtzinger. "With my 'scope sight and a sitting position—okay, I'll try it."

"You stay here, Court," I said to James. "This is Augie's head, and I don't want any argument over your having fired first."

James grunted while Holtzinger clamped his scope to his rifle. We crouched our way up the spit, keeping the sand ridge between us and the duckbill. When we got to the end, where there was no more cover, we crept along on hands and knees, moving slowly. If you move slowly enough, directly towards or away from a dinosaur, it probably won't notice you.

The duckbill continued to grub about on all fours, every few seconds rising to look round. Holtzinger eased himself into the sitting position, cocked his piece, and aimed through his 'scope. And then—

Bang! bang! went a big rifle back at the camp.

Holtzinger jumped. The duckbill jerked their heads up and leaped for the deep water, splashing like mad. Holtzinger fired once and missed. I took one shot at the last duckbill before it vanished, too, but missed. The .600 isn't built for long ranges.

Holtzinger and I started back towards the camp, for it had struck us that our party might be in theropod trouble.

What had happened was that a big sauropod had wandered down past the camp under water, feeding as it went. Now, the water shoaled about a hundred meters offshore from our spit, halfway over to the swamp on the other side. The sauropod had ambled up the slope until its body was almost all out of water, weaving its head from side to side and looking for anything green to gobble. This is a species of *Alamosaurus,* which looks much like the well-

known *Apatosaurus*, the one they used to call *Brontosaurus* except that it's bigger.

When I came in sight of the camp, the sauropod was turning round to go back the way it had come, making horrid groans. By the time we reached the camp, it had disappeared into deep water, all but its head and seven meters of neck, which wove about for some time before they vanished into the haze.

When we came up to the camp, James was arguing with the Raja. Holtzinger burst out:

"You crummy bastard! That's the second time you've spoiled my shots."

"Don't be a fool," said James. "I couldn't let him wander into the camp and stamp everything flat."

"There was no danger of that," said the Raja. "You can see the water is deep offshore. It's just that our trigger-happy Mr. James cannot see any animal without shooting."

I added: "If it did get close, all you needed to do was throw a stick of firewood at it. They're perfectly harmless."

This wasn't strictly true. When the Comte de Lautrec ran after one for a close shot, the sauropod looked back at him, gave a flick of its tail, and took off the Comte's head as neatly as if he'd been axed in the Tower. But, as a rule, they're inoffensive enough.

"How was I to know?" yelled James, turning purple. "You're all against me. What the hell are we on this miserable trip for, except to shoot things? Call yourselves hunters, but I'm the only one who hits anything!"

I got pretty wrothy and said he was just an excitable young skite with more money than brains, whom I should never have brought along.

"If that's how you feel," he said, "give me a burro and some food, and I'll go back to the base by myself. I won't pollute your pure air with my presence!"

"Don't be a bigger ass than you can help," I said. "What you propose is quite impossible."

"Then I'll go alone!" He grabbed his knapsack, thrust a couple of tins of beans and an opener into it, and started off with his rifle.

Beauregard Black spoke up: "Mr. Rivers, we cain't let him go off like that. He'll git lost and starve, or be et by a theropod."

"I'll fetch him back," said the Raja, and started after the runaway.

He caught up with James as the latter was disappearing into the cycads. We could see them arguing and waving their hands in the distance. After a while, they started back with arms around each other's necks like old school pals.

This shows the trouble we get into if we make mistakes in planning such a do. Having once got back in time, we had to make the best of our bargain.

I don't want to give the impression, however, that Courtney James was nothing but a pain in the arse. He had good points. He got over these rows

quickly and next day would be as cheerful as ever. He was helpful with the general work of the camp, at least when he felt like it. He sang well and had an endless fund of dirty stories to keep us amused.

We stayed two more days at that camp. We saw crocodile, the small kind, and plenty of sauropod—as many as five at once—but no more duckbill. Nor any of those fifteen-meter super-crocodiles.

So, on the first of May, we broke camp and headed north towards the Janpur Hills. My sahibs were beginning to harden up and were getting impatient. We'd been in the Cretaceous a week, and no trophies.

We saw nothing to speak of on the next leg, save a glimpse of a gorgosaur out of range and some tracks indicating a whopping big iguanodont, eight or ten meters high. We pitched camp at the base of the hills.

We'd finished off the bonehead, so the first thing was to shoot fresh meat. With an eye to trophies, too, of course. We got ready the morning of the third, and I told James:

"See here, cobber, no more of your tricks. The Raja will tell you when to shoot."

"Uh-huh, I get you," he said, meek as Moses.

We marched off, the four of us, into the foothills.

There was a good chance of getting Holtzinger his ceratopsian. We'd seen a couple on the way up, but mere calves without decent horns.

As it was hot and sticky, we were soon panting and sweating. We'd hiked and scrambled all morning without seeing a thing except lizards, when I picked up the smell of carrion. I stopped the party and sniffed. We were in an open glade cut up by those little dry nullahs. The nullahs ran together into a couple of deeper gorges that cut through a slight depression choked with denser growth, cycad and screw pine. When I listened, I heard the thrum of carrion flies.

"This way," I said. "'Something ought to be dead—ah, here it is!"

And there it was: the remains of a huge ceratopsian lying in a little hollow on the edge of the copse. Must have weighted six or eight ton alive; a three-horned variety, perhaps the penultimate species of *Triceratops*. It was hard to tell, because most of the hide on the upper surface had been ripped off, and many bones had been pulled loose and lay scattered about.

Holtzinger said: "Oh, shucks! Why couldn't I have gotten to him before he died? That would have been a darned fine head."

I said: "On your toes, chaps. A theropod's been at this carcass and is probably nearby."

"How d'you know?" said James, with sweat running off his round red face. He spoke in what was for him a low voice, because a nearby theropod is a sobering thought to the flightiest.

I sniffed again and thought I could detect the distinctive rank odor of

theropod. I couldn't be sure, though, because the carcass stank so strongly. My sahibs were turning green at the sight and smell of the cadaver. I told James:

"It's seldom that even the biggest theropod will attack a full-grown ceratopsian. Those horns are too much for them. But they love a dead or dying one. They'll hang round a dead ceratopsian for weeks, gorging and then sleeping off their meals for days at a time. They usually take cover in the heat of the day anyhow, because they can't stand much direct hot sunlight. You'll find them lying in copses like this or in hollows, wherever there's shade."

"'What'll we do?" asked Holtzinger.

"We'll make our first cast through this copse, in two pairs as usual. Whatever you do, don't get impulsive or panicky."

I looked at Courtney James, but he looked right back and merely checked his gun.

"Should I still carry this broken?" he asked.

"No; close it, but keep the safety on till you're ready to shoot," I said. "We'll keep closer than usual, so we shall be in sight of each other. Start off at that angle, Raja; go slowly, and stop to listen between steps."

We pushed through the edge of the copse, leaving the carcass but not its stench behind us. For a few meters, you couldn't see a thing.

It opened out as we got in under the trees, which shaded out some of the brush. The sun slanted down through the trees. I could hear nothing but the hum of insects and the scuttle of lizards and the squawks of toothed birds in the treetops. I thought I could be sure of the theropod smell but told myself that might be imagination. The theropod might be any of several species, large or small, and the beast itself might be anywhere within a kilometer's radius.

"Go on," I whispered to Holtzinger. I could hear James and the Raja pushing ahead on my right and see the palm fronds and ferns lashing about as they disturbed them. I suppose they were trying to move quietly, but to me they sounded like an earthquake in a crockery shop.

"A little closer!" I called.

Presently, they appeared slanting in towards me.

We dropped into a gully filled with ferns and scrambled up the other side. Then we found our way blocked by a big clump of palmetto.

"You go round that side; we'll go round this," I said. We started off, stopping to listen and smell. Our positions were the same as on that first day, when James killed the bonehead.

We'd gone two-thirds of the way round our half of the palmetto, when I heard a noise ahead on our left. Holtzinger heard it, too, and pushed off his safety. I put my thumb on mine and stepped to one side to have a clear field of fire.

The clatter grew louder. I raised my gun to aim at about the height of a big theropod's heart. There was a movement in the foliage-and a two-meter-high

bonehead stepped into view, walking solemnly across our front and jerking its head with each step like a giant pigeon.

I heard Holtzinger let out a breath and had to keep myself from laughing. Holtzinger said: "Uh—"

Then that damned gun of James's went off, *bang! bang!* I had a glimpse of the bonehead knocked arsy-varsy with its tail and hind-legs flying.

"Got him!" yelled James. "I drilled him clean!" I heard him run forward.

"Good God, if he hasn't done it again!" I said.

Then there was a great swishing of foliage and a wild yell from James. Something heaved up out of the shrubbery, and I saw the head of the biggest of the local flesh-eaters, *Tyrannosaurus trionyches* himself.

The scientists can insist that *rex* is the bigger species, but I'll swear this blighter was bigger than any *rex* ever hatched. It must have stood six meters high and been fifteen meters long. I could see its big bright eye and twelve-centimeter teeth and the big dewlap that hangs down from its chin to its chest.

The second of the nullahs that cut through the copse ran athwart our path on the far side of the palmetto clump. Perhaps it was two meters deep. The tyrannosaur had been lying in this, sleeping off its last meal. Where its back stuck up above the ground level, the ferns on the edge of the nullah masked it. James had fired both barrels over the theropod's head and woke it up. Then the silly ass ran forward without reloading. Another six meters and he'd have stepped on the tyrannosaur.

James, naturally, stopped when this thing popped up in front of him. He remembered that he'd fired both barrels and that he'd left the Raja too far behind for a clear shot.

At first, James kept his nerve. He broke open his gun, took two rounds from his belt, and plugged them into the barrels. But, in his haste to snap the gun shut, he caught his hand between the barrels and the action. The painful pinch so startled James that he dropped his gun. Then he went to pieces and bolted.

The Raja was running up with his gun at high port, ready to snap it to his shoulder the instant he got a clear view. When he saw James running headlong towards him, he hesitated, not wishing to shoot James by accident. The latter plunged ahead, blundered into the Raja, and sent them both sprawling among the ferns. The tyrannosaur collected what little wits it had and stepped forward to snap them up.

And how about Holtzinger and me on the other side of the palmettos? Well, the instant James yelled and the tyrannosaur's head appeared, Holtzinger darted forward like a rabbit. I'd brought my gun up for a shot at the tyrannosaur's head, in hope of getting at least an eye; but, before I could find it in my sights, the head was out of sight behind the palmettos. Perhaps I should have fired at hazard, but all my experience is against wild shots.

When I looked back in front of me, Holtzinger had already disappeared round the curve of the palmetto clump. I'd started after him when I heard his rifle and the click of the bolt between shots: *bang*—click-click—*bang*—click-click, like that.

He'd come up on the tyrannosaur's quarter as the brute started to stoop for James and the Raja. With his muzzle six meters from the tyrannosaur's hide, Holtzinger began pumping .375s into the beast's body. He got off three shots when the tyrannosaur gave a tremendous booming grunt and wheeled round to see what was stinging it. The jaws came open, and the head swung round and down again.

Holtzinger got off one more shot and tried to leap to one side. As he was standing on a narrow place between the palmetto clump and the nullah, he fell into the nullah. The tyrannosaur continued its lunge and caught him. The jaws went *chomp*, and up came the head with poor Holtzinger in them, screaming like a damned soul.

I came up just then and aimed at the brute's face, but then realized that its jaws were full of my sahib and I should be shooting him, too. As the head went on up, like the business end of a big power shovel, I fired a shot at the heart. The tyrannosaur was already turning away, and I suspect the ball just glanced along the ribs. The beast took a couple of steps when I gave it the other barrel in the back. It staggered on its next step but kept on. Another step, and it was nearly out of sight among the trees, when the Raja fired twice. The stout fellow had untangled himself from James, got up, picked up his gun, and let the tyrannosaur have it.

The double wallop knocked the brute over with a tremendous crash. It fell into a dwarf magnolia, and I saw one of its huge birdlike hindlegs waving in the midst of a shower of pink-and-white petals. But the tyrannosaur got up again and blundered off without even dropping its victim. The last I saw of it was Holtzinger's legs dangling out one side of its jaws (he'd stopped screaming) and its big tail banging against the tree trunks as it swung from side to side.

The Raja and I reloaded and ran after the brute for all we were worth. I tripped and fell once, but jumped up again and didn't notice my skinned elbow till later. When we burst out of the copse, the tyrannosaur was already at the far end of the glade. We each took a quick shot but probably missed, and it was out of sight before we could fire again.

We ran on, following the tracks and spatters of blood, until we had to stop from exhaustion. Never again did we see that tyrannosaur. Their movements look slow and ponderous, but with those tremendous legs they don't have to step very fast to work up considerable speed.

When we'd got our breath, we got up and tried to track the tyrannosaur, on the theory that it might be dying and we should come up to it. But, though

we found more spoor, it faded out and left us at a loss. We circled round, hoping to pick it up, but no luck.

Hours later, we gave up and went back to the glade.

Courtney James was sitting with his back against a tree, holding his rifle and Holtzinger's. His right hand was swollen and blue where he'd pinched it, but still usable. His first words were:

"Where the hell have you two been?"

I said: "We've been occupied. The late Mr. Holtzinger. Remember?"

"You shouldn't have gone off and left me; another of those things might have come along. Isn't it bad enough to lose one hunter through your stupidity without risking another one?"

I'd been preparing a warm wigging for James, but his attack so astonished me that I could only bleat:

"What? *We* lost . . .?"

"Sure," he said. "You put us in front of you, so if anybody gets eaten it's us. You send a guy up against these animals under-gunned. You—"

"You God-damn' stinking little swine!" I said. "If you hadn't been a blithering idiot and blown those two barrels, and then run like the yellow coward you are, this never would have happened. Holtzinger died trying to save your worthless life. By God, I wish he'd failed! He was worth six of a stupid, spoiled, muttonheaded bastard like you—"

I went on from there. The Raja tried to keep up with me, but ran out of English and was reduced to cursing James in Hindi.

I could see by the purple color on James's face that I was getting home. He said: "Why, you—" and stepped forward and sloshed me one in the face with his left fist.

It rocked me a bit, but I said: "Now then, my lad, I'm glad you did that! It gives me a chance I've been waiting for . . ."

So I waded into him. He was a good-sized bod, but between my hundred kilos and his sore right hand he had no chance. I got a few good ones home, and down he went.

"Now get up!" I said. "And I'll be glad to finish off!"

James raised himself to his elbows. I got set for more fisticuffs, though my knuckles were skinned and bleeding already. James rolled over, snatched his gun, and scrambled up, swinging the muzzle from one to the other of us.

"You won't finish anybody off!" he panted through swollen lips. "All right, put your hands up! Both of you!"

"Do not be an idiot," said the Raja. "Put that gun away!"

"Nobody treats me like that and gets away with it!"

"There's no use murdering us," I said. "You'd never get away with it."

"Why not? There won't be much left of you after one of these hits you. I'll

just say the tyrannosaur ate you, too. Nobody could prove anything. They can't hold you for a murder eighty-five million years old. The statute of limitations, you know."

"You fool, you'd never make it back to the camp alive!" I shouted.

"I'll take a chance —" began James, setting the butt of his .500 against his shoulder, with the barrels pointed at my face. Looked like a pair of bloody vehicular tunnels.

He was watching me so closely that he lost track of the Raja for a second. My partner had been resting on one knee, and now his right arm came up in a quick bowling motion with a rock. The rock bounced off James's head. The .500 went off. The ball must have parted my hair, and the explosion bloody well near broke my eardrums. Down went James again.

"Good work, old chap!" I said, gathering up James's gun.

"Yes," said the Raja thoughtfully, as he picked up the rock he'd thrown and tossed it. "Doesn't quite have the balance of a cricket ball, but it is just as hard."

"What shall we do now?" I said. "I'm inclined to leave the beggar here unarmed and let him fend for himself."

The Raja gave a little sigh. "It's a tempting thought, Reggie; but we really cannot, you know. Not done."

"I suppose you're right," I said. "Well, let's tie him up and take him back to camp."

We agreed there was no safety for us unless we kept James under guard every minute until we got home. Once a man has tried to kill you, you're a fool if you give him another chance.

We marched James back to camp and told the crew what we were up against. James cursed everybody.

We spent three dismal days combing the country for that tyrannosaur, but no luck. We felt it wouldn't have been cricket not to make a good try at recovering Holtzinger's remains. Back at our main camp, when it wasn't raining, we collected small reptiles and things for our scientific friends. The Raja and I discussed the question of legal proceedings against Courtney James, but decided we were up a gum tree in that direction.

When the transition chamber materialized, we fell over one another getting into it. We dumped James, still tied, in a corner, and told the chamber operator to throw the switches.

While we were in transition, James said: "You two should have killed me back there."

"Why?" I said. "You don't have a particularly good head,"

The Raja added: "Wouldn't look at all well over a mantel."

"You can laugh," said James, "but I'll get you someday. I'll find a way and get off scot-free."

"My dear fellow!" I said. "If there were some way to do it, I'd have you charged with Holtzinger's death. Look, you'd best leave well enough alone."

When we came out in the present, we handed him his empty gun and his other gear, and off he went without a word. As he left, Holtzinger's girl, that Claire, rushed up crying:

"Where is he? Where's August?"

There was a bloody heart-rending scene, despite the Raja's skill at handling such situations.

We took our men and beasts down to the old laboratory building that the university has fitted up as a serai for such expeditions. We paid everybody off and found we were broke. The advance payments from Holtzinger and James didn't cover our expenses, and we should have precious little chance of collecting the rest of our fees either from James or from Holtzinger's estate.

And speaking of James, d'you know what that drongo was doing? He went home, got more ammunition, and came back to the university. He hunted up Professor Prochaska and asked him:

"Professor, I'd like you to send me back to the Cretaceous for a quick trip. If you can work me into your schedule right now, you can just about name your own price. I'll offer five thousand to begin with. I want to go to April twenty-third, eighty-five million B.C,"

Prochaska answered: "Why do you wish to go back again so soon?"

"I lost my wallet in the Cretaceous," said James. "I figure if I go back to the day before I arrived in that era on my last trip, I'll watch myself when I arrived on that trip and follow myself around till I see myself lose the wallet."

"Five thousand is a lot for a wallet," said the professor.

"It's got some things in it I can't replace," said James.

"Well," said Prochaska, thinking. "The party that was supposed to go out this morning has telephoned that they would be late, so perhaps I can work you in. I have always wondered what would happen when the same man occupied the same stretch of time twice."

So James wrote out a check, and Prochaska took him to the chamber and saw him off. James's idea, it seems, was to sit behind a bush a few meters from where the transition chamber would appear and pot the Raja and me as we emerged.

Hours later, we'd changed into our street clothes and phoned our wives to come and get us. We were standing on Forsythe Boulevard waiting for them when there was a loud crack, like an explosion, and a flash of light not twenty meters from us. The shock wave staggered us and broke windows.

We ran towards the place and got there just as a policeman and several citizens came up. On the boulevard, just off the kerb, lay a human body. At least, it had been that, but it looked as if every bone in it had been pulverized and every blood vessel burst, so it was hardly more than a slimy mass of pink

protoplasm. The clothes it had been wearing were shredded, but I recognized an H. & H. .500 double-barreled express rifle. The wood was scorched and the metal pitted, but it was Courtney James' gun. No doubt whatever.

Skipping the investigations and the milling about that ensued, what had happened was this: Nobody had shot at us as we emerged on the twenty-fourth, and that couldn't be changed. For that matter, the instant James started to do anything that would make a visible change in the world of eighty-five million BC, such as making a footprint in the earth, the space-time forces snapped him forward to present to prevent a paradox. And the violence of the passage practically tore him to bits.

Now that this is better understood, the professor won't send anybody to a period less than a thousand years prior to the time some time-traveler has already explored, because it would be too easy to do some act, like chopping down a tree or losing some durable artifact, that would affect the later world. Over longer periods, he tells me, such changes average out and are lost in the stream of time.

We had a rough time after that, with the bad publicity and all, though we did collect a fee from James's estate. Luckily for us, a steel manufacturer turned up who wanted a mastodon's head for his den.

I understand these things better, now, too. The disaster hadn't been wholly James's fault. I shouldn't have taken him when I knew what a spoiled, unstable sort of bloke he was. And, if Holtzinger could have used a really heavy gun, he'd probably have knocked the tyrannosaur down, even if he didn't kill it, and so have given the rest of us a chance to finish it.

So, Mr. Seligman, that's why I won't take you to that period to hunt. There are plenty of other eras, and if you look them over I'm sure you'll find something to suit you. But not the Jurassic or the Cretaceous. You're just not big enough to handle a gun for dinosaur.

Nahr al-Kalb

I stopped beside Dog River, and I watched the water pour
From Lebanon's grey, craggy height to wash the Punic strand,
And scanned the old inscriptions, and recalled the men of yore.

I tarried at Dog River, and I saw a warlike band
Of swarthy archers and of wicker-shielded spearmen slow,
With Ramses in his golden car, the lord of all the land.

I stood beside Dog River, and I saw an army go,
Of curly-bearded, hook-nosed men, in crested copper helm –
Sennacherib's grim horde, who made such seas of blood to flow.

I waited by Dog River, in the days of Persia's realm,
And Alexander's kilted Greeks went by with measured stride,
Their red-haired godlet on his way the King of Kings to whelm.

I lingered near Dog River, in the days of Roman pride;
With iron helms, and hobnailed boots, and eagles borne before,
Marched Antoninus' legions with the Spanish sword at side.

I sat beside Dog River when a swarm of camels bore
The Prophet's sheeted *badaw'n*, inflamed with holy zest
To wreak upon the unbeliever Allah's righteous war.

I lay beside Dog River as, with crosses on their breast,
The mailed Crusaders jingled past, to keep the oath they swore
To seek the Holy Sepulcher from turbaned Turk to wrest.

I dozed beside Dog River when, during the Kaiser's war,
A British army plodded through, with Anzac hats awry,
And Highland kilts, and armored cars, and cannon by the score.

I dreamt beside Dog River as the Free French rumbled by
In jeeps and tanks and camions; with eager, martial glee
They yelled and waved their jugs of wine, as airplanes stitched the sky.

I woke beside Dog River, and the thought occurred to me:
These gallant fighters all are dust, as those to come will be;
But Nahr al-Kalb flows ever from the mountain to the sea.

Lest Darkness Fall

CHAPTER I

Tancredi took his hands off the wheel again and waved them. "—so I envy you, Dr. Padway. Here in Rome we have still some work to do. But *pah!* It is all filling in little gaps. Nothing big, nothing new. And restoration work. Building contractor's work. Again, *pah!*"

"Professor Tancredi," said Martin Padway patiently, "as I said, I am not a doctor. I hope to be one soon, if I can get a thesis out of this Lebanon dig." Being himself the most cautious of drivers, his knuckles were white from gripping the side of the little Fiat, and his right foot ached from trying to shove it through the floor boards.

Tancredi snatched the wheel in time to avoid a lordly Isotta by the thickness of a razor blade. The Isotta went its way thinking dark thoughts. "Oh, what is the difference? Here everybody is a doctor, whether he is or not, if you understand me. And such a smart young man as you—What was I talking about?"

"That depends." Padway closed his eyes as a pedestrian escaped destruction. "You were talking about Etruscan inscriptions, and then about the nature of time, and then about Roman archaeol—"

"Ah, yes, the nature of time. This is just a silly idea of mine, you understand. I was saying all these people who just disappear, they have slipped back down the suitcase."

"The what?"

"The trunk, I mean. The trunk of the tree of time. When they stop slipping, they are back in some former time. But as soon as they do anything, they change all subsequent history."

"Sounds like a paradox," said Padway.

"No-o. The trunk continues to exist. But a new branch starts out where

they come to rest. It has to, otherwise we would all disappear, because history would have changed and our parents might not have met."

"That's a thought," said Padway. "It's bad enough knowing the sun might become a nova, but if we're also likely to vanish because somebody has gone back to the twelfth century and stirred things up—"

"No. That has never happened. We have never vanished, that is. You see, doctor? We continue to exist, but another history has been started. Perhaps there are many such, all existing somewhere. Maybe, they aren't much different from ours. Maybe the man comes to rest in the middle of the ocean. So what? The fish eat him, and things go on as before. Or they think he is mad, and shut him up or kill him. Again, not much difference. But suppose he becomes a king or a *duce?* What then?

"*Presto*, we have a new history! History is a four-dimensional web. It is a tough web. But it has weak points. The junction places—the focal points, one might say—are weak. The backslipping, if it happens, would happen at these places."

"What do you mean by focal points?" asked Padway. It sounded to him like polysyllabic nonsense.

"Oh, places like Rome, where the world-lines of many famous events intersect. Or Istanbul. Or Babylon. You remember that archaeologist, Skrzetuski, who disappeared at Babylon in 1936?"

"I thought he was killed by some Arab holdup men."

"Ah. They never found his body! Now, Rome may soon again be the intersection point of great events. That means the web is weakening again here."

"I hope they don't bomb the Forum," said Padway.

"Oh, nothing like that. Our *Duce* is much too clever to get us into a real war. But let us not talk politics. The web, as I say, is tough. If a man did slip back, it would take a terrible lot of work to distort it. Like a fly in a spider web that fills a room."

"Pleasant thought," said Padway.

"Is it not, though?" Tancredi turned to grin at him, then trod frantically on the brake. The Italian leaned out and showered a pedestrian with curses.

He turned back to Padway. "Are you coming to my house for dinner tomorrow?"

"Wh-what? Why yes, I'll be glad to. I'm sailing next—"

"*Si, si.* I will show you the equations I have worked out. Energy must be conserved, even in changing one's time. But nothing of this to my colleagues, please. You understand." The sallow little man took his hands off the wheel to wag both forefingers at Padway. "It is a harmless eccentricity. But one's professional reputation must not suffer."

"*Eek!*" said Padway.

Tancredi jammed on the brake and skidded to a stop behind a truck halted

at the intersection of the Via del Mare and the Piazza Aracoeli. "What was I talking about?" he asked.

"Harmless eccentricities," said Padway. He felt like adding that Professor Tancredi's driving ranked among his less harmless ones. But the man had been very kind to him.

"Ah, yes. Things get out, and people talk. Archaeologists talk even worse than most people. Are you married?"

"What?" Padway felt he should have gotten used to this sort of thing by now. He hadn't. "Why—yes."

"Good. Bring your wife along. Then you see some real Italian cooking, not this spaghetti-and-meat-balls stuff."

"She's back in Chicago." Padway didn't feel like explaining that he and his wife had been separated for over a year.

He could see, now, that it hadn't been entirely Betty's fault. To a person of her background and tastes he must have seemed pretty impossible: a man who danced badly, refused to play bridge, and whose idea of fun was to get a few similar creatures in for an evening of heavy talk on the future of capitalism and the love life of the bullfrog. At first she had been thrilled by the idea of traveling in far places, but one taste of living in a tent and watching her husband mutter over the inscriptions on potsherds had cured that.

And he wasn't much to look at—rather small, with outsize nose and ears and a diffident manner. At college they had called him Mouse Padway. Oh, well, a man in exploratory work was a fool to marry, anyway. Just look at the divorce rate among them—anthropologists, paleontologists, and such.

"Could you drop me at the Pantheon?" he asked. "I've never examined it closely, and it's just a couple of blocks to my hotel."

"Yes, doc-tor, though I am afraid you will get wet. It looks like rain, does it not?"

"That's all right. This coat will shed water."

Tancredi shrugged. They bucketed down the Corso Vittorio Emanuele and screeched around the comer into the Via Cestari. Padway got out at the Piazza del Pantheon, and Tancredi departed, waving both arms and shouting: "Tomorrow at eight, then? Si, fine."

Padway looked at the building for a few minutes. He had always thought it a very ugly one, with the Corinthian front stuck on the brick rotunda. Of course that great concrete dome had taken some engineering, considering when it had been erected. Then he had to jump to avoid being spattered as a man in a Fascist uniform tore by on a motorcycle.

Padway walked over to the portico, round which clustered men engaged in the national sport of loitering. One of the things that he liked about Italy was that here he was, by comparison, a fairly tall man. Thunder rumbled behind

him, and a raindrop struck his hand. He began to take long steps. Even if his trench coat would shed water, he didn't want his new twelve-thousand-lire Borsalino soaked. He liked that hat.

His reflections were cut off in their prime by the grand-daddy of all lightning flashes, which struck the Piazza to his right. The pavement dropped out from under him like a trapdoor.

His feet seemed to be dangling over nothing. He could not see anything for the reddish-purple after-images in his retinas. The thunder rolled on and on.

It was a most disconcerting feeling, hanging in the midst of nothing. There was no uprush of air as in falling down a shaft. He felt somewhat as Alice must have felt on her leisurely fall down the rabbit-hole, except that his senses gave him no clear information as to what was happening. He could not even guess how fast it was happening.

Then something hard smacked his soles. He almost fell. The impact was about as strong as that resulting from a two-foot fall. As he staggered by he hit his shin on something. He said "Ouch!"

His retinas cleared. He was standing in the depression caused by the drop of a roughly circular piece of pavement.

The rain was coming down hard, now. He climbed out of the pit and ran under the portico of the Pantheon. It was so dark that the lights in the building ought to have been switched on. They were not.

Padway saw something curious: the red brick of the rotunda was covered by slabs of marble facing. That, he thought, was one of the restoration jobs that Tancredi had been complaining about.

Padway's eyes glided indifferently over the nearest of the loafers. They switched back again sharply. The man, instead of coat and pants, was wearing a dirty white woolen tunic.

It was odd. But if the man wanted to wear such a getup, it was none of Padway's business.

The gloom was brightening a little. Now Padway's eyes began to dance from person to person. They were all wearing tunics. Some had come under the portico to get out of the rain. These also wore tunics, sometimes with poncholike cloaks over them.

A few of them stared at Padway without much curiosity. He and they were still staring when the shower let up a few minutes later. Padway knew fear.

The tunics alone would not have frightened him. A single incongruous fact might have a rational if recondite explanation. But everywhere he looked more of these facts crowded in on him. He could not concisely notice them all at once.

The concrete sidewalk had been replaced by slabs of slate.

There were still buildings around the Piazza, but they were not the same buildings. Over the lower ones Padway could see that the Senate House and

the Ministry of Communications—both fairly conspicuous objects—were missing.

The sounds were different. The honk of taxi horns was absent. There were no taxis to honk. Instead, two oxcarts creaked slowly and shrilly down the Via della Minerva.

Padway sniffed. The garlic-and-gasoline aroma of modern Rome had been replaced by a barnyard-and-backhouse symphony wherein the smell of horse was the strongest and also the most mentionable motif. Another ingredient was incense, wafting from the door of the Pantheon.

The sun came out. Padway stepped out into it. Yes, the portico still bore the inscription crediting the construction of the building to M. Agrippa.

Glancing around to see that he was not watched, Padway stepped up to one of the pillars and slammed his fist into it. It hurt.

"Hell," said Padway, looking at his bruised knuckles.

He thought, I'm not asleep. All this is too solid and consistent for a dream. There's nothing fantastic about the early afternoon sunshine and the beggars around the Piazza.

But if he was not asleep, what? He might be crazy . . . But that was a hypothesis difficult to build a sensible course of action on.

There was Tancredi's theory about slipping back in time. Had he slipped back, or had something happened to him to make him imagine he had? The time-travel idea did not appeal to Padway. It sounded metaphysical, and he was a hardened empiricist.

There was the possibility of amnesia. Suppose that flash of lightning had actually hit him and suppressed his memory up to that time; then suppose something had happened to jar it loose again . . . He would have a gap in his memory between the first lightning flash and his arrival in this archaistic copy of old Rome. All sorts of things might have happened in the meantime. He might have blundered into a movie set. Mussolini, having long secretly believed himself a reincarnation of Julius Caesar, might have decided to make his people adopt classical Roman costume.

It was an attractive theory. But the fact that he was wearing exactly the same clothes, and had the same things in his pockets as before the flash, exploded it.

He listened to the chatter of a couple of the loafers. Padway spoke fair, if pedantic, Italian. He could not quite get the substance of these men's talk. In the rush of syllables he would often catch a familiar sound-group, but never enough at one time. Their speech had the tantalizing pseudo familiarity of Platt-deutsch to an English-speaking person.

He thought of Latin. At once the loafers' speech became more familiar. They were not speaking classical Latin. But Padway found that if he took one of their sentences and matched it first against Italian and then against Latin, he could understand most of it.

He decided that they were speaking a late form of Vulgar Latin, rather more than halfway from the language of Cicero to that of Dante. He had never even tried to speak this hybrid. But by dredging his memory for his knowledge of sound changes, he could make a stab at it: *Omnia Gallia e devisa en parte trei, quaro una encolont Belge, alia . . .*

The two loafers had observed his eavesdropping. They frowned, lowered their voices, and moved off.

No, the hypothesis of delirium might be a tough one, but it offered fewer difficulties than that of the time-slip.

If he was imagining things, was he really standing in front of the Pantheon and imagining that the people were dressed and speaking in the manner of the period 300–900 AD? Or was he lying in a hospital bed recovering from near-electrocution and imagining he was in front of the Pantheon? In the former case he ought to find a policeman and have himself taken to a hospital. In the latter this would be waste motion. For safety's sake he had better assume the former.

No doubt one of these people was really a policeman complete with shiny hat. What did he mean by "really"? Let Bertrand Russell and Alfred Korzybski worry about that. How to find . . .

A beggar had been whining at him for a couple of minutes. Padway gave such a perfect impression of deafness that the ragged little hunchback moved off. Now another man was speaking to him. On his left palm the man held a string of beads with a cross, all in a heap. Between his right thumb and forefinger he held the clasp of the string. He raised his right hand until the whole string hung from it, then lowered it back onto his left palm, then raised it again, talking all the while.

Whenever and however all this was, that gesture assured Padway that he was still in Italy.

Padway asked in Italian: "Could you tell me where I could find a policeman?"

The man stopped his sales talk, shrugged, and replied, *"Non compr'endo."*

"Hey!" said Padway. The man paused. With great concentration Padway translated his request into what he hoped was Vulgar Latin.

The man thought, and said he didn't know.

Padway started to turn elsewhere. But the seller of beads called to another hawker: "*Marco!* The gentleman wants to find a police agent."

"The gentleman is brave. He is also crazy," replied Marco.

The bead-seller laughed. So did several people. Padway grinned a little; the people were human if not very helpful. He said: "Please, I—really—want—to—know."

The second hawker, who had a tray full of brass knickknacks tied around his neck, shrugged. He rattled off a paragraph that Padway could not follow.

Padway slowly asked the bead-seller: "What did he say?"

"He said he didn't know," replied the bead-seller. "I don't know either."

Padway started to walk off. The bead-seller called after him: "Mister."

"Yes."

"Did you mean an agent of the municipal prefect?"

"Yes."

"Marco, where can the gentleman find an agent of the municipal prefect?"

"I don't know," said Marco.

The bead-seller shrugged. "Sorry, I don't know either."

If this were twentieth-century Rome, there would no difficulty about finding a cop. And not even Benny the Moose could make a whole city change its language. So he must be in (a) a movie set, (b) ancient Rome (the Tancredi hypothesis), or (c) a figment of his imagination.

He started walking. Talking was too much of a strain.

It was not long before any lingering hopes about a movie set were dashed by the discovery that this alleged ancient city stretched for miles in all directions, and its street plan was quite different from that of modern Rome. Padway found his little pocket map nearly useless.

The signs on the shops were in intelligible classical Latin. The spelling had remained as in Caesar's time if the pronunciation had not.

The streets were narrow, and for the most part not very crowded. The town had a drowsy, shabby-genteel rundown personality, like that of Philadelphia.

At one relatively busy intersection, Padway watched a man on a horse direct traffic. He would hold up hand to stop an oxcart, and beckon a sedan chair across. The man wore a gaudily striped shirt and leather trousers. He looked like a central or northern European rather than an Italian.

Padway leaned against a wall, listening. A man would say a sentence just too fast for him to catch. It was like having your hook nibbled but never taken. By terrific concentration, Padway forced himself to think in Latin. He mixed his cases and numbers, but as long as he confined himself to simple sentences he did not have too much trouble with vocabulary.

A couple of small boys were watching him. When he looked at them, they giggled and raced off.

It reminded Padway of those United States Government projects for the restoration of Colonial towns, like Williamsburg. But this looked like the real thing. No restoration included all the dirt and disease, the insults and altercations, that Padway had seen and heard in an hour's walk.

Only two hypotheses remained: delirium and time-slip. Delirium now seemed the less probable. He would act on the assumption that things were in fact what they seemed.

He couldn't stand there indefinitely. He'd have to ask questions and get himself oriented. The idea gave him gooseflesh. He had a phobia about accosting strangers. Twice he opened his mouth, but his glottis closed up tight with stage fright.

Come on, Padway, get a grip on yourself. "I beg your pardon, but could you tell me the date?"

The man addressed, a mild-looking person with a loaf of bread under his arm, stopped and looked blank. "*Qui'e'?* What is it?"

"I said, could you tell me the date?"

The man frowned. Was he going to be nasty? But all he said was, *"Non compr'endo."* Padway tried again, speaking very slowly. The man repeated that he did not understand.

Padway fumbled for his date-book and pencil. He wrote his request on a page of the date-book, and held the thing up.

The man peered at it, moving his lips. His face cleared. "Oh, you want to know the *date?*" said he.

"*Sic*, the date."

The man rattled a long sentence at him. It might as well have been in Trabresh. Padway waved his hands despairingly, crying, *"Lento!"*

The man backed up and started over. "I said I understood you, and I thought it was October 9th, but I wasn't sure because I couldn't remember whether my mother's wedding anniversary came three days ago or four."

"What year?"

"What *year?*"

"*Sic*, what year?"

"Twelve eighty-eight *Anno Urbis Conditae.*"

It was Padway's turn to be puzzled. "Please, what is that in the Christian era?"

"You mean, how many years since the birth of Christ?"

"*Hoc ille*—that's right."

"Well, now—I don't know; five hundred and something. Better ask a priest, stranger."

"I will," said Padway. "Thank you."

"It's nothing," said the man, and went about his business. Padway's knees were weak, though the man hadn't bitten him, and had answered his question in a civil enough manner. But it sounded as though Padway, who was a peaceable man, had not picked a very peaceable period.

What was he to do? Well, what would any sensible man do under the circumstances? He'd have to find a place to sleep and a method of making a living. He was a little startled when he realized how quickly he had accepted the Tancredi theory as a working hypothesis.

He strolled up an alley to be out of sight and began going through his pockets. The roll of Italian bank notes would be about as useful as a broken five-cent mousetrap. No, even less; you might be able to fix a mousetrap. A book of American Express traveler's checks, a Roman street-car transfer, an Illinois driver's license, a leather case full of keys—all ditto. His pen, pencil,

and lighter would be useful as long as ink, leads, and lighter fuel held out. His pocketknife and his watch would undoubtedly fetch good prices, but he wanted to hang onto them as long as he could.

He counted the fistful of small change. There were just twenty coins, beginning with four ten-lire silver cartwheels. They added up to forty-nine lire, eight centesimi, or about five dollars. The silver and bronze should be exchangeable. As for the nickel fifty-centesimo and twenty-centesimo pieces, he'd have to see. He started walking again.

He stopped before an establishment that advertised itself as that of S. Dentatus, goldsmith and money changer. He took a deep breath and went in.

S. Dentatus had a face rather like that of a frog. Padway laid out his change and said: "I . . . I should like to change this into local money, please." As usual he had to repeat the sentence to make himself understood.

S. Dentatus blinked at the coins. He picked them up, one by one, and scratched at them a little with a pointed instrument. "Where do these—you—come from?" he finally croaked.

"America."

"Never heard of it."

"It is a long way off."

"Hm-m-m. What are these made of? Tin?" The money changer indicated the four nickel coins. "Nickel."

"What's that? Some funny metal they have in your country?"

"Hoc ille."

"What's it worth?"

Padway thought for a second of trying to put a fantastically high value on the coins. While he was working up his courage, S. Dentatus interrupted his thoughts:

"It doesn't matter, because I wouldn't touch the stuff. There wouldn't be any market for it. But these other pieces—let's see—" He got out a balance and weighed the bronze coins, and then the silver coins. He pushed counters up and down the grooves of a little bronze abacus, and said: "They're worth just under one solidus. Give you a solidus even for them."

Padway didn't answer immediately. Eventually he'd have to take what was offered, as he hated the idea of bargaining and didn't know the values of the current money. But to save his face he had to appear to consider the offer carefully.

A man stepped up to the counter beside him. He was a heavy, ruddy man with a flaring brown moustache and his hair in a long or Ginger Rogers bob. He wore a linen blouse and long leather pants. He grinned at Padway, and reeled off: *Ho, frijond, habais faurthei! Alai skalljans sind waidedjans.*"

Oh, Lord, another language! Padway answered: "I . . . I am sorry, but I do not understand."

The man's face fell a little; he dropped into Latin: "Sorry, thought you were from the Chersonese, from your clothes. I couldn't stand around and watch a fellow Goth swindled without saying anything, ha, ha!"

The Goth's loud, explosive laugh made Padway jump a little; he hoped nobody noticed. "I appreciate that. What is this stuff worth?"

"What has he offered you?" Padway told him. "Well," said the man, "even I can see that you're being hornswoggled. You give him a fair rate, Sextus, or I'll make you eat your own stock. That would be funny, ha, ha!"

S. Dentatus sighed resignedly. "Oh, very well, a solidus and a half. How am I to live, with you fellows interfering with legitimate business all the time? That would be, at the current rate of exchange, one solidus thirty-one sesterces."

"What is this about a rate of exchange?'" asked Padway.

The Goth answered: "The gold-silver rate. Gold has been going down the last few months."

Padway said: "I think I will take it all in silver."

While Dentatus sourly counted out ninety-three sesterces, the Goth asked: "Where do you come from? Somewhere up in the Hunnish country?"

"No," said Padway, "a place farther than that, called America. You have never heard of it, have you?"

"No. Well now, that's interesting. I'm glad I met you, young fellow. It'll give me something to tell the wife about. She thinks I head for the nearest brothel every time I come to town, ha, ha!" He fumbled in his handbag and brought out a large gold ring and an unfaceted gem. "Sextus, this thing came out of its setting again. Fix it up, will you? And no substitutions, mind."

As they went out, the Goth spoke to Padway in a lowered voice. "The real reason I'm glad to come to town is that somebody put a curse on my house."

"A curse? What kind of a curse?"

The Goth nodded solemnly. "A shortness-of-breath curse. When I'm home I can't breathe. I go around like this—" He gasped asthmatically. "But as soon as I get away from home I'm all right. And I think I know who did it."

"Who?"

"I foreclosed a couple of mortgages last year. I can't prove anything against the former owners, but—" He winked ponderously at Padway.

"Tell me," said Padway, "do you keep animals in your house?"

"'Couple of dogs. There's the stock, of course, but we don't let them in the house. Though a shoat got in yesterday and ran away with one of my shoes. Had to chase it all over the damned farm. I must have been a sight, ha, ha!"

"Well," said Padway, "try keeping the dogs outside all the time and having your place well swept every day. That might stop your—uh—wheezing:'

"Now, that's interesting. You really think it would?"

"I do not know. Some people get the shortness of breath from dog hairs. Try it for a couple of months and see."

"I still think it's a curse, young fellow, but I'll try your scheme. I've tried everything from a couple of Greek physicians to one of St. Ignatius' teeth, and none of them works." He hesitated. "If you don't mind, what were you in your own country?"

Padway thought quickly, then remembered the few acres he owned in downstate Illinois. "I had a farm," he said.

"That's fine," roared the Goth, clapping Padway on the back with staggering force. I'm a friendly soul but I don't want to get mixed up with people too far above or below my own class, ha, ha! My name is Nevitta; Nevitta Gummund's son. If you're passing up the Flaminian Way sometime, drop in. My place is about eight miles north of here."

"Thanks. My name is Martin Padway. Where would be a good place to rent a room?"

"That depends. If I didn't want to spend too much money, I'd pick a place farther down the river. Plenty of boarding houses over toward the Viminal Hill. Say, I'm in no hurry; I'll help you look." He whistled sharply and called: *"Hermann, hiri her!"*

Hermann, who was dressed much like his master, got up off the curb and trotted down the street leading two horses, his leather pants making a distinctive *flop-flop* as he ran.

Nevitta set out a brisk walk, Hermann leading the horses behind. Nevitta said: "What did you say your name was?"

"Martin Padway—Martinus is good enough." (Padway properly pronounced it Mart*ee*no.)

Padway did not want to impose on Nevitta's good nature, but he wanted the most useful information he could get. He thought a minute, then asked: "Could you give me the names of a few people in Rome, lawyers and physicians and such, to go to when I need them?"

"Sure. If you want a lawyer specializing in cases involving foreigners, Valerius Mummius is your man. His office is alongside of the Aemilian Basilica. For a physician try my friend Leo Vekkos. He's a good fellow as Greeks go. But personally I think the relic of a good Arian saint like Asterius is as effective as all their herbs and potations."

"It probably is at that," said Padway. He wrote the names and addresses in his date-book. "How about a banker?"

"I don't have much truck with them; hate the idea of getting in debt. But if you want the name of one, there's Thomasus the Syrian, near the Aemilian Bridge. Keep your eyes open if you deal with him."

"Why, isn't he honest?"

"Thomasus? Sure he's honest. You just have to watch him, that's all. Here, this looks like a place you could stay." Nevitta pounded on the door, which was opened by a frowsy superintendent.

This man had a room, yes. It was small and ill-lighted. It smelled. But then so did all of Rome. The superintendent wanted seven sesterces a day.

"Offer him half," said Nevitta to Padway in a stage whisper . . .

Padway did. The superintendent acted as bored by the ensuing haggling as Padway was. Padway got the room for five sesterces.

Nevitta squeezed Padway's hand in his large red paw. "Don't forget, Martinus, come see me some time. I always like to hear a man who spēaks Latin with a worse accent than mine, ha, ha!" He and Hermann mounted and trotted off.

Padway hated to see them go. But Nevitta had his own business to tend to. Padway watched the stocky figure round a corner, then entered the gloomy, creaking boarding house.

CHAPTER II

Padway awoke early with a bad taste in his mouth, and a stomach that seemed to have some grasshopper in its ancestry. Perhaps that was the dinner he'd eaten—bad, but unfamiliar—consisting mainly of stew smothered in leeks. The restaurateur must have wondered when Padway made plucking motions at the table top; he was unthinkingly trying to pick up a knife and fork that weren't there.

One might very well sleep badly the first night on a bed consisting merely of a straw-stuffed mattress. And it had cost him an extra sesterce a day, too. An itch made him pull up his undershirt. Sure enough, a row of red spots on his midriff showed that he had not, after all, slept alone.

He got up and washed with the soap he had bought the previous evening. He had been pleasantly surprised to find that soap had already been invented. But when he broke a piece off the cake, which resembled a slightly decayed pumpkin pie, he found that the inside was soft and gooey because of incomplete potash-soda metathesis. Moreover, the soap was so alkaline that he thought he might as well have cleaned his hands and face by sandpapering.

Then he made a determined effort to shave with olive oil and a sixth-century razor. The process was so painful that he wondered if it mightn't be better to let nature take its course.

He was in a tight fix, he knew. His money would last about a week—with care, perhaps a little longer.

If a man knew he was going to be whisked back into the past, he would load himself down with all sorts of useful junk in preparation, an encyclopedia, texts on metallurgy, mathematics, and medicine, a slide rule, and so forth. And a gun, with plenty of ammunition.

But Padway had no gun, no encyclopedia, nothing but what an ordinary

twentieth-century man carries in his pockets. Oh, a little more, because he'd been traveling at the time: such useful things as the traveler's checks, a hopelessly anachronistic street map, and his passport.

And he had his wits. He'd need them.

The problem was to find a way of using his twentieth century knowledge that would support him without getting him into trouble. You couldn't, for example, set out to build an automobile. It would take several lifetimes to collect the necessary materials, and several more to learn how to handle them and to worry them into the proper form. Not to mention the question of fuel.

The air was fairly warm, and he thought of leaving his hat and vest in the room. But the door had the simplest kind of ward lock, with a bronze key big enough to be presented by a mayor to a visiting dignitary. Padway was sure he could pick the lock with a knife blade. So he took all his clothes along. He went back to the same restaurant for breakfast. The place had a sign over the counter reading, RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTS NOT ALLOWED. Padway asked the proprietor how to get to the address of Thomasus the Syrian.

The man said: "You follow along Long Street down to the Arch of Constantine, and then New Street to the Julian Basilica, and then you turn left onto Tuscan Street, and—" and so on.

Padway made him repeat it twice. Even so, it took most of the morning to find his objective. His walk took him past the Forum area, full of temples, most of whose columns had been removed for use in the five big and thirty-odd little churches scattered around the city. The temples looked pathetic, like a Park Avenue doorman bereft of his pants.

At the sight of the Ulpian Library, Padway had to suppress an urge to say to hell with his present errand. He loved burrowing into libraries, and he definitely did not love the idea of bearding a strange banker in a strange land with a strange proposition. In fact, the idea scared him silly, but his was the kind of courage that shows itself best when its owner is about to collapse from blue funk. So he grimly kept on toward the Tiber.

Thomasus hung out in a shabby two-story building. The Negro at the door—probably a slave—ushered Padway into what he would have called a living room. Presently the banker appeared. Thomasus was a paunchy, bald man with a cataract on his left eye. He gathered his shabby robe about him, sat down, and said: "Well, young man?"

"I—" Padway swallowed and started again—"I'm interested in a loan."

"How much?"

"I don't know yet. I want to start a business, and I'll have to investigate prices and things first."

"You want to start a new business? In Rome? *Hmm-m.*" Thomasus rubbed his hands together. "What security can you give?"

"None at all."

"What?"

"I said, none at all. You'd just have to take a chance on me."

"But . . . but, my dear sir, don't you know anybody in town?"

"I know a Gothic farmer named Nevitta Gummund's son. He sent me hither."

"Oh, yes, Nevitta. I know him slightly. Would he go your note?"

Padway thought. Nevitta, despite his expansive gestures, had impressed him as being pretty close where money was concerned. "No," he said, "I don't think he would."

Thomasus rolled his eyes upward. "Do You hear that, God? He comes in here, a barbarian who hardly knows Latin, and admits that he has no security and no guarantors, and still he expects me to lend him money! Did You ever hear the like?"

"I think I can make you change your mind," said Padway.

Thomasus shook his head and made clucking noises. "You certainly have plenty of self-confidence, young man; I admit as much. What did you say your name was?" Padway told him what he had told Nevitta. "All right, what's your scheme?"

"As you correctly inferred," said Padway, hoping he was showing the right mixture of dignity and cordiality, "I'm a foreigner. I just arrived from a place called America. That's a long way off, and naturally it has a lot of customs and features different from those of Rome. Now, if you could back me in the manufacture of some of our commodities that are not known here—"

"Ai!" yelped Thomasus, throwing up his hands. "Did You hear that, God? He doesn't want me to back him in some well-known business. Oh, no. He wants me to start some newfangled line that nobody ever heard of! I couldn't think of such a thing, Martinus. What was it you had in mind?"

"Well, we have a drink made from wine, called brandy, that ought to go well."

"No, I couldn't consider it. Though I admit that Rome needs manufacturing establishments badly. When the capital was moved to Ravenna, all revenue from Imperial salaries was cut off, which is why the population has shrunk so the last century. The town is badly located, and hasn't any real reason for being any more. But you can't get anybody to do anything about it. King Thiudahad spends his time writing Latin verse. Poetry! But no, young man, I couldn't put money into a wild project for making some weird barbarian drink."

Padway's knowledge of sixth-century history was beginning to come back to him. He said: "Speaking of Thiudahad, has Queen Amalaswentha been murdered yet?"

"Why"—Thomasus looked sharply at Padway with his good eye—"yes, she has." That meant that Justinian, the "Roman" emperor of Constantinople,

would soon begin his disastrously successful effort to reconquer Italy for the Empire. "But why did you put your question that way?"

Padway asked. "Do —do you mind if I sit down?"

Thomasus said he didn't. Padway almost collapsed into a chair. His knees were weak. Up to now his adventure had seemed like a complicated and difficult masquerade party. His own question about the murder of Queen Amalaswentha had brought home to him all at once the fearful hazards of life in this world.

Thomasus repeated: "I asked why, young sir, you put your question that way?"

"What way?" asked Padway innocently. He saw where he'd made a slip.

"You asked whether she had been murdered *yet*. That sounds as though you had known ahead of time that she would be killed. Are you a soothsayer?"

There were no flies on Thomasus. Padway remembered Nevitta's advice to keep his eyes open.

He shrugged. "Not exactly. I heard before I came here that there had been trouble between the two Gothic sovereigns, and that Thiudahad would put his co-ruler out of the way if he had a chance. I—uh—just wondered how it came out, that's all."

"Yes," said the Syrian. "It was a shame. She was quite a woman. Good-looking, too, though she was in her forties. They caught her in her bath last summer and held her head under. Personally I think Thiudahad's wife Gudelinda put the old jelly-fish up to it. He wouldn't have nerve enough by himself."

"Maybe she was jealous," said Padway. "Now, about the manufacture of that barbarian drink, as you call it—"

"What? *You* are a stubborn fellow. It's absolutely out of the question, though. You have to be careful, doing business here in Rome. It's not like a growing town. Now, if this were Constantinople—" he sighed. "You can really make money in the East. But I don't care to live there, with Justinian making life exciting for the heretics, as he calls them. What's your religion, by the way?"

"What's yours? Not that it makes any difference to me."

"Nestorian."

"Well," said Padway carefully, "I'm what we call a Congregationalist." (It was not really true, but he guessed an agnostic would hardly be popular in this theology-mad world.) "That's the nearest thing we have to Nestorianism in my country. But about the manufacture of brandy—"

"Nothing doing, young man. Absolutely not. How much equipment would you need to start?"

"Oh, a big copper kettle and a lot of copper tubing, and a stock of wine for the raw material. It wouldn't have to be good wine. And I could get started quicker with a couple of men to help me."

"I'm afraid it's too much of a gamble. I'm sorry."

"Look here, Thomasus, if I show you how you can halve the time it takes you to do your accounts, would you be interested?"

"You mean you're a mathematical genius or something?"

"No, but I have a system I can teach your clerks."

Thomasus closed his eyes like some Levantine Buddha. "Well—if you don't want more than fifty solidii."

"All business is a gamble, you know."

"That's the trouble with it. But—I'll do it, *if* your accounting system is as good as you say it is."

"How about interest?" asked Padway.

"Three per cent."

Padway was startled. Then he asked. "Three per cent per what?"

"Per month, of course."

"Too much."

"Well, what do you expect?"

"In my country six per cent per year is considered fairly high."

"You mean you expect *me* to lend you money at that rate? *Ai!* Did You hear that, God? Young man, you ought to go live among the wild Saxons, to teach them something about piracy. But I like you, so I'll make it twenty-five per year."

"Still too much. I might consider seven and a half."

"You're being ridiculous. I wouldn't consider less than twenty for a minute."

"No. Nine per cent, perhaps."

"I'm not even interested. Too bad; it would have been nice to do business with you. Fifteen."

"That's out, Thomasus. Nine and a half."

"Did You hear that, God? He wants me to make him a present of my business! Go away, Martinus. You're wasting your time here. I couldn't possibly come down any more. Twelve and a half. That's absolutely the bottom."

"Ten."

"Don't you understand Latin? I said that was the bottom. Good day; I'm glad to have met you." When Padway got up, the banker sucked his breath through his teeth as though he had been wounded unto death, and rasped: "Eleven."

"Ten and a half."

"Would you mind showing your teeth? My word, they are human after all. I thought maybe they were shark's teeth. Oh, *very* well. This sentimental generosity of mine will be my ruin yet. And now let's see that accounting system of yours."

An hour later three chagrined clerks sat in a row and regarded Padway with

expressions of, respectively, wonderment, apprehension, and active hatred. Padway had just finished doing a simple piece of long division with Arabic numerals, while they had barely gotten started on the interminable trial-and-error process that their system required. Padway translated his answers back into Roman, wrote it out on his tablet, and handed the tablet To Thomasus.

"There you are," he said. "Have one of the boys check it by multiplying the divisor by the quotient. You might as well call them off their job; they'll be at it all night."

The middle-aged clerk, the one with the hostile expression, copied down the figures and began checking grimly. When after a long time he finished, he threw down his stylus. "That man's a sorcerer of some sort," he growled. "He does the operations in his head, and puts down all those silly marks just to fool us."

"Not at all," said Padway urbanely. "I can teach you to do the same."

"What? *Me* take lessons from a long-trousered barbarian? I—" he started to say more, but Thomasus cut him off by saying that he'd do as he was told, and no back talk. "Is that so?" sneered the man. "I'm a free Roman citizen, and I've been keeping books for twenty years. I guess I know my business. If you want a man to use that heathen system, go buy yourself some cringing Greek slave. I'm through!"

"Now see what you've done!" cried Thomasus when the clerk had taken his coat off the peg and marched out. "I shall have to hire another man, and with this labor shortage—"

"That's all right," soothed Padway. "These two boys will be able to do all the work of three easily, once they learn American arithmetic. And that isn't all; we have something called double-entry bookkeeping, which enables you to tell any time how you stand financially, and to catch errors—"

"Do You hear that, God? He wants to turn the whole banking business upside down! Please, dear sir, one thing at a time; or you'll drive us mad! I'll grant your loan. I'll help you buy your equipment. Only don't spring any more of your revolutionary methods just now!" He continued more calmly: "What's that bracelet I see you looking at from time to time?"

Padway extended his wrist. "It's a portable sundial, of sorts. We call it a watch."

"A *vatcha*, hm? It looks like magic. Are you sure you aren't a sorcerer after all?" He laughed nervously.

"No," said Padway. "It's a simple mechanical device, like a—a water clock."

"Ah. I see. But why a pointer to show sixtieths of an hour? Surely nobody in his right mind would want to know the time as closely as that?"

"We find it useful."

"Oh, well, other lands, other customs. How about giving my boys a lesson in your American arithmetic now? Just to assure us that it is as good as you claim."

"All right. Give me a tablet." Padway scratched the numerals 1 to 9 in the wax, and explained them.

"Now," he said, "this is the important part." He drew a circle. "This is our character meaning *nothing*."

The younger clerk scratched his head. "You mean it's a symbol without meaning? What would be the use of that?"

"I didn't say it was without meaning. It means nil, zero—what you have left when you take two away from two."

The older clerk looked skeptical. "It doesn't make sense to me. What is the use of a symbol for what does not exist?"

"You have a *word* for it, haven't you? Several words, in fact. And you find them useful, don't you?"

"I suppose so," said the older clerk. "But we don't use *nothing* in our calculations. Whoever heard of figuring the interest on a loan at no per cent? Or renting a house for no weeks?"

"Maybe," grinned the younger clerk, "the honorable sir can tell us how to make a profit on no sales—"

Padway snapped: "And we'll get through this explanation sooner with no interruptions. You'll learn the reason for the zero symbol soon enough."

It took an hour to cover the elements of addition. Then Padway said the clerks had had enough for one day; they should practice addition for a while every day until they could do it faster than by Roman numerals. Actually he was worn out. He was naturally a quick speaker, and to have to plod syllable by syllable through this foul language almost drove him crazy.

"Very ingenious, Martinus," wheezed the banker. "And now for the details of that loan. Of course you weren't serious in setting such an absurdly low figure as ten and a half per cent—"

"What? You're damn right I was serious! And you agreed—"

"Now, Martinus. What I meant was that *after* my clerks had learned your system, if it was as good as you claimed, I'd consider lending you money at that rate. But meanwhile you can't expect me to give you my—"

Padway jumped up. "You—you wielder of a—oh, hell, what's Latin for *chisel?* If you won't—"

"Don't be hasty, my young friend. After all, you've given my boys their start; they can go alone from there if need be. So you might as well—"

"All right, you just let them try to go on from there. I'll find another banker and teach his clerks properly. Subtraction, multiplication, div—"

"Ai!" yelped Thomasus. "You can't go spreading this secret all over Rome! It wouldn't be fair to me!"

"Oh, can't I? Just watch. I could even make a pretty good living teaching it. If you think—"

"Now, now, let's not lose our tempers. Let's remember Christ's teachings

about patience. I'll make a special concession because you're just starting out in business . . ."

Padway got his loan at ten and a half. He agreed grudgingly not to reveal his arithmetic elsewhere until the first loan was paid off.

Padway bought a copper kettle at what he would have called a junk shop. But nobody had ever heard of copper tubing. After he and Thomasus had exhausted the secondhand metal shops between the latter's house and the warehouse district at the south end of town, he started in on coppersmith's places.

The coppersmiths had never heard of copper tubing, either. A couple of them offered to try to turn out some, but at astronomical prices.

"Martinus!" wailed the banker. "We've walked at least five miles, and my feet are giving out. Wouldn't lead pipe do just as well? You can get all you want of that."

"It would do fine except for one thing," said Padway, "we'd probably poison our customers. And that *might* give the business a bad name, you know."

"Well, I don't see that you're getting anywhere as it is."

Padway thought a minute while Thomasus and Ajax, the Negro slave, who was carrying the kettle, watched him. "If I could hire a man who was generally handy with tools, and had some metal-working experience, I could show him how to make copper tubing. How do you go about hiring people here?"

"You don't," said Thomasus. "It just happens. You could buy a slave—but you haven't enough money. I shouldn't care to put up the price of a good slave into your venture. And it takes a skilled foreman to get enough work out of a slave to make him a profitable investment."

Padway said, "How would it be to put a sign in front of your place, stating that a position is open?"

"What?" squawked the banker. "Do You hear that, God? First he seduces my money away from me on this wild plan. Now he wants to plaster my house with signs! Is there no limit—"

"Now, Thomasus, don't get excited. It won't be a big sign, and it'll be very artistic. I'll paint it myself. You want me to succeed, don't you?"

"It won't work, I tell you. Most workmen can't read. And I won't have you demean yourself by manual labor that way. It's ridiculous; I won't consider it. About how big a sign did you have in mind?"

Padway dragged himself to bed right after dinner. There was no way, as far as he knew, of getting back to his own time. Never again would he know the pleasures of the *American Journal of Archaeology*, of Mickey Mouse, of flush toilets, of speaking the simple, rich, sensitive English language . . .

Padway hired his man the third day after his first meeting with Thomasus the Syrian. The man was a dark, cocky little Sicilian named Hannibal Scipio.

Padway had meanwhile taken a short lease on a tumble-down house on the Quirinal, and collected such equipment and personal effects as he thought

he would need. He bought a short-sleeved tunic to wear over his pants, with the idea of making himself less conspicuous. Adults seldom paid much attention to him in this motley town, but he was tired of having small boys follow him through the streets. He did, however, insist on having ample pockets sewn into the tunic, despite the tailor's shocked protests at ruining a good, stylish garment with this heathen innovation.

He whittled a mandrel out of wood and showed Hannibal Scipio how to bend the copper stripping around it. Hannibal claimed to know all that was necessary about soldering. But when Padway tried to bend the tubing into shape for his still, the seams popped open with the greatest of ease. After that Hannibal was a little less cocky—for a while.

Padway approached the great day of his first distillation with some apprehension. According to Tancredi's ideas this was a new branch of the tree of time. But mightn't the professor have been wrong, so that, as soon as Padway did anything drastic enough to affect all subsequent history, he would make the birth of Martin Padway in 1908 impossible, and disappear?

"Shouldn't there be an incantation or something?" asked Thomasus the Syrian.

"No," said Padway. "As I've already said three times, this isn't magic." Looking around though, he could see how some mumbo-jumbo might have been appropriate: running his first large batch off at night in a creaky old house, illuminated by flickering oil lamps, in the presence of only Thomasus, Hannibal Scipio, and Ajax. All three looked apprehensive, and the Negro seemed all teeth and eyeballs. He stared at the still as if he expected it to start producing demons in carload lots any minute.

"It takes a long time, doesn't it?" said Thomasus, rubbing his pudgy hands together nervously. His good eye glittered at the nozzle from which drop after yellow drop slowly dripped.

"I think that's enough," said Padway. "We'll get mostly water if we continue the run." He directed Hannibal to remove the kettle and poured the contents of the receiving flask into a bottle. "I'd better try it first," he said. He poured out a little into a cup, sniffed, and took a swallow. It was definitely not good brandy. But it would do.

"Have some?" he said to the banker.

"Give some to Ajax first."

Ajax backed away, holding his hands in front of him, yellow palms out. "No, please, master—"

He seemed so alarmed that Thomasus did not insist. "Hannibal, how about you?"

"Oh, no," said Hannibal. "Meaning no disrespect, but I've got a delicate stomach. The least little thing upsets it. And if you're all through, I'd like to go

home. I didn't sleep well last night." He yawned theatrically. Padway let him go, and took another swallow.

"Well," said Thomasus, "if you're sure it won't hurt me, I might take just a little." He took just a little, then coughed violently, spilling a few drops from the cup. "Good God, man, what are your insides made of? That's volcano juice!" As his coughing subsided, a saintlike expression appeared. "It does warm you up nicely inside, though, doesn't it?" He screwed up his face and his courage, and finished the cup in one gulp.

"Hey," said Padway. "Go easy. That isn't wine."

"Oh, don't worry about me. Nothing makes me drunk."

Padway got out another cup and sat down. "Maybe you can tell me one thing that I haven't got straight yet. In my country we reckon years from the birth of Christ. When I asked a man, the day I arrived, what year it was, he said 1288 after the founding of the city. Now, can you tell me how many years before Christ Rome was founded? I've forgotten."

Thomasus took another slug of brandy and thought. "Seven hundred and fifty-four—no, 753. That means that this is the year of our Lord 535. That's the system the church uses. The Goths say the second year of Thiudahad's reign, and the Byzantines the first year of the consulship of Flavius Belisarius. Or the somethingith year of Justinian *imperium*. I can see how it might I confuse you." He drank some more. "This is a wonderful invention, isn't it?" He held his cup up and turned it this way and that. "Let's have some more. I think you'll make a success, Martinus."

"Thanks. I hope so."

"Wonderful invention. Course it'll be a success. Couldn't help being a success. A big success. Are You listening, God? Well, make sure my friend Martinus has a big success.

"I know a successful man when I see him, Martinus. Been picking them for years. That's how I'm such a success in the banking business. Success—success—let's drink to success. Beautiful success. Gorgeous success.

"I know what, Martinus. Let's go some place. I don't like drinking to success in this old ruin. You know, atmosphere. Some place where there's music. How much brandy have you got left? Good, bring the bottle along."

The joint was in the theater district on the north side of the Capitoline. The "music" was furnished by a young woman who twanged a harp and sang songs in Calabrian dialect, which the cash customers seemed to find very funny."

"Let's drink to—" Thomasus started to say "success" for the thirtieth time, but changed his mind. "Say, Martinus, we'd better buy some of this lousy wine, or he'll have us thrown out. How does this stuff mix with wine?" At Padway's expression, he said: "Don't worry, Martinus, old friend, this is on me. Haven't made a night of it in years. You know, family man." He winked

and snapped his fingers for the waiter. When he had finally gotten through his little ceremony, he said: "Just a minute, Martinus, old friend, I see a man who owes me money. I'll be right back." He waddled unsteadily across the room.

A man at the next table asked Padway suddenly: "What's that stuff you and old one-eye have been drinking, friend?"

"Oh, just a foreign drink called brandy," said Padway uneasily.

"That's right, you're a foreigner, aren't you? I can tell by your accent." He screwed up his face, and then said: "I know; you're a Persian. I know a Persian accent."

"Not exactly," said Padway. "Farther away than that. "

"That so? How do you like Rome?" The man had very large and very black eyebrows.

"Fine, so far," said Padway.

"Well, you haven't seen anything," said the man. "It hasn't been the same since the Goths came." He lowered his voice conspiratorially: "Mark my words, it won't be like this always, either!"

"You don't like the Goths?"

"No! Not with the persecution we have to put up with."

"Persecution?" Padway raised his eyebrows.

"Religious persecution. We won't stand for it forever."

"I thought the Goths let everybody worship as they pleased."

"That's just it! We Orthodox are forced to stand around and watch Arians and Monophysites and Nestorians and Jews going about their business unmolested, as if they owned the country. If that isn't persecution, I'd like to know what is!"

"You mean that you're persecuted because the heretics and such are not?"

"Certainly, isn't that obvious? We won't stand for it forever. What's your religion, by the way?"

"Well," said Padway, "I'm what in my country is called a Congregationalist. That's the nearest thing to Orthodoxy that we have."

"*Hm-m-m.* We'll make a good Catholic out of you, perhaps. So long as you're not one of these Maronites or Nestorians—"

"What's that about Nestorians?" said Thomasus, who had returned unobserved. "We who have the only logical view of the nature of the Son—that He was a man in whom the Father indwelt—"

"Nonsense!" snapped Eyebrows. "That's what you expect of half-baked amateur theologians. Our view—that of the dual nature of the Son—has been irrefutably shown—"

"Hear that, God? As if one person could have more than one nature—"

"You're all crazy," rumbled a tall, sad-looking man with thin yellow hair, watery blue eyes, and a heavy accent. "We Arians abhor theological controversy, being sensible men. But if you want a sensible view of the nature of the Son—"

"You're a Goth?" barked Eyebrows tensely.

"No, I'm a Vandal, exiled from Africa. But as I was saying" —he began counting on his fingers— "either the Son was a man, or He was a god, or He was something in between. Well, now, we admit He wasn't a man. And there's only one God, so He wasn't a god. So He must have been—"

About that time things began to happen too fast for Padway to follow them all at once. Eyebrows jumped up and began yelling like one possessed. Padway couldn't follow him, except to note that the term "infamous heretics" occurred about once per sentence. Yellow Hair roared back at him, and other men began shouting from various parts of the room: "Eat him up, barbarian!" "This is an Orthodox country, and those who don't like it can go back where they—" "Damned nonsense about dual natures! We Monophysites—" "I'm a Jacobite, and I can lick any man in the place!" "Let's throw all the heretics out!" "I'm a Eunomian, and I can lick any *two* men in the place!"

Padway saw something coming and ducked, the mug missed his head by an inch and a half. When he looked up the room was a blur of action. Eyebrows was holding the self-styled Jacobite by the hair and punching his face; Yellow Hair was swinging four feet of bench around his head and howling a Vandal battle song. Padway hit one champion of Orthodoxy in the middle; his place was immediately taken by another who hit Padway in the middle. Then they were overborne by a rush of men.

As Padway struggled up through the pile of kicking, yelling humanity, like a swimmer striking for the surface, somebody got hold of his foot and tried to bite it off. As Padway was still wearing a pair of massive and practically indestructible English walking shoes, the biter got nowhere. So he shifted his attack to Padway's ankle. Padway yelped with pain, yanked his foot free, and kicked the biter in the face. The face yielded a little, and Padway wondered whether he'd broken a nose or a few teeth. He hoped he had.

The heretics seemed to be in a minority, that shrank as its members were beaten down and cast forth into darkness. Padway's eye caught the gleam of a knife blade and he thought it was well past his bedtime. Not being a religious man, he had no desire to be whittled up in the cause of the single, dual, or any other nature of Christ. He located Thomasus the Syrian under a table. When he tried to drag him out, the banker shrieked with terror and hugged the table leg as if it were a woman and he a sailor who had been six months at sea. Padway finally got him untangled.

The yellow-haired Vandal was still swinging his bench. Padway shouted at him. The man couldn't have understood in the uproar, but his attention was attracted, and when Padway pointed at the door he got the idea. In a few seconds he had cleared a path. The three stumbled out, pushed through the crowd that was beginning to gather outside, and ran. A yell behind them made them run faster, until they realized that it was Ajax, and slowed down to let him catch up.

They finally sat down on a park bench on the edge of the Field of Mars, only a few blocks from the Pantheon, where Padway had his first sight of post Imperial Rome. Thomasus, when he got his breath, said: "Martinus, why did you let me drink so much of that heathen drink? Oh, my head! If I hadn't been drunk, I'd have had more sense than to start a theological argument."

"I tried to slow you down," said Padway mildly, "but you—"

"I know, I know. But you should have prevented me from drinking so much, forcibly if necessary. My head! What will my wife say? I never want to see that lousy barbarian drink again! What did you do with the bottle, by the way?"

"It got lost in the scuffle. But there wasn't much left in it anyway." Padway turned to the Vandal. "I guess I owe you some thanks for getting us out of there so quickly."

The man pulled his drooping mustache. "I was glad to do it, friend. Religious argument is no occupation for decent people. Permit me; my name is Fritharik, Staifan's son." He spoke slowly, fumbling for words occasionally. "Once I was counted a man of noble family. Now I am merely a poor wanderer. Life holds nothing for me any more." Padway saw a tear glistening in the moonlight.

"You said you were a Vandal?"

Fritharik sighed like a vacuum cleaner. "Yes, mine was one of the finest estates in Carthage, before the Greeks came. When King Gelimer ran away, and our army scattered, I escaped to Spain, and thence I came hither last year."

"What are you doing now?"

"Alas, I am not doing anything now. I had a job as bodyguard to a Roman patrician until last week. Think of it—a noble Vandal serving as bodyguard! But my employer got set on the idea of converting me to Orthodoxy. That," said Fritharik with dignity, "I would not allow. So here I am. When my money is gone, I don't know what will become of me. Perhaps I will kill myself. Nobody would care." He sighed some more, then said: "You aren't looking for a good, reliable bodyguard, are you?"

"Not just now," said Padway, "but I may be in a few weeks. Do you think you can postpone your suicide until then?"

"I don't know. It depends on how my money holds out. I have no sense about money. Being of noble birth, I never needed any. I don't know whether you'll ever see me alive again." He wiped his eyes on his sleeve.

"Oh, for heaven's sake," said Thomasus, "there are plenty of things you could do."

"No," said Fritharik tragically. "You wouldn't understand, friend. There are considerations of honor. And anyway, what has life to offer me? Did you say you might be able to take me on later?" he asked Padway.

Padway said yes, and gave him his address. "Very well, friend, I shall probably be in a nameless lonely grave before two weeks have passed. But if not, I'll be around."

CHAPTER III

At the end of the week, Padway was gratified not only by the fact that he had not vanished into thin air, and by the appearance of the row of bottles on the shelf, but by the state of his finances. Counting the five solidi for the first month's rent on the house, the six more that had gone into his apparatus, and Hannibal's wages and his own living expenses, he still had over thirty of his fifty borrowed solidi left. The first two items wouldn't recur for a couple of weeks, anyway.

"How much are you going to charge for that stuff?" asked Thomasus.

Padway thought. "It's a luxury article, obviously. If we can get some of the better-class restaurants to stock it, I don't see why we shouldn't get two solidi per bottle. At least until somebody discovers our secret and begins competing with us."

Thomasus rubbed his hands together. "At that rate, you could practically pay back your loan with the proceeds of the first week's sales. But I'm in no hurry; it might be better to reinvest them in the business. We'll see how things turn out. I think I know the restaurant we should start with."

Padway experienced a twinge of dread at the idea of trying to sell the restaurateur the idea. He was not a born salesman, and he knew it.

He asked, "How should I go about getting him to buy some of the stuff? I'm not very familiar with your Roman business methods."

"That's all right. He won't refuse, because he owes me money, and he's behind in his interest payment. I'll introduce you."

It came about as the banker had said. The restaurant owner, a puffy man named Gaius Attalus, glowered a bit at first. The entrepreneur fed him a little brandy by way of a sample, and he warmed up. Thomasus had to ask God whether He was listening only twice before Attalus agreed to Padway's price for half a dozen bottles.

Padway, who had been suffering from one of his periodic fits of depression all morning, glowed visibly as they emerged from the restaurant, his pockets pleasantly heavy with gold."

"I think," said Thomasus, "you had better hire that Vandal chap, if you're going to have money around the house; And I'd spend some of it on a good strong box."

So when Hannibal Scipio told Padway "There's a tall, gloomy-looking bird outside who says you said to come see you," he had the Vandal sent in and hired him almost at once.

When Padway asked Fritharik what he proposed to do his bodyguarding with, Fritharik looked embarrassed, chewed his mustache, and finally said, "I had a fine sword, but I hocked it to keep alive. It was all that stood between me and a nameless grave. Perhaps I shall end in one yet," he sighed.

"Stop thinking about graves for a while," snapped Padway, "and tell me how much you need to get your sword back."

"Forty solidi."

"*Whew!* Is it made of solid gold, or what?"

"No. But it's good Damascus steel, and has gems in the handle. It was all that I saved from my beautiful estate in Africa. You have no idea what a fine place I had—"

"Now, now!" said Padway. "For heaven's sake don't start crying! Here's five solidi; go buy yourself the best sword you can with that. I'm taking it out of your salary. If you want to save up to get this bejeweled cheese knife of yours back, that's your business." So Fritharik departed, and shortly thereafter reappeared with a secondhand sword clanking at his side.

"It's the best I could do for the money," he explained. "The dealer claimed it was Damascus work, but you can tell that the Damascus marks on the blade are fakes. This local steel is soft, but I suppose it will have to do. When I had my beautiful estate in Africa, the finest steel was none too good." He sighed gustily.

Padway examined the sword, which was a typical sixth-century *spatha* with a broad single-edged thirty-inch blade. It was, in fact, much like a Scotch broadsword without the fancy knuckle-guard. He also noticed that Fritharik Staifan's son, though as mournful as ever, stood straighter and walked with a more determined stride when wearing the sword. He must, Padway thought, feel practically naked without it.

"Can you cook?" Padway asked Fritharik.

"You hired me as a bodyguard, not as a housemaid, my lord Martinus. I have my dignity."

"Oh, nonsense, old man. I've been doing my own cooking, but it takes too much of my time. If I don't mind, you shouldn't. Now, can you cook?"

Fritharik pulled his mustache. "Well—yes."

"What, for instance?"

"I can do a steak. I can fry bacon."

"What else?"

"Nothing else. That is all I ever had occasion to do. Good red meat is the food for a warrior. I can't stomach these greens the Italians eat."

Padway sighed. He resigned himself to living on an unbalanced diet until—well, why not? He could at least inquire into the costs of domestic help.

Thomasus found a serving-wench for him who would cook, clean house, and make beds for an absurdly low wage. The wench was named Julia. She came from Apulia and talked dialect. She was about twenty, dark, stocky, and gave promise of developing tremendous heft in later years. She wore a single shapeless garment and padded about the house on large bare feet. Now and then she cracked a joke too rapidly for Padway to follow and shook with peals of laughter. She worked hard, but Padway had to teach her his ideas from the ground up. The first time he fumigated his house he almost frightened her out of her wits. The smell of sulfur dioxide sent her racing out the door shrieking that Satanas had come.

Padway decided to knock off on his fifth Sunday in Rome. For almost a month he had been working all day and most of the night, helping Hannibal to run the still, clean it, and unload casks of wine; and seeing restaurateurs who had received inquiries from their customers about this remarkable new drink.

In an economy of scarcity, he reflected, you didn't have to turn handsprings finding customers, once your commodity caught on. He was meditating striking Thomasus for a loan to build another still. This time he'd build a set of rolls and roll his own copper sheeting out of round stock, instead of trying to patch together this irregular hand-hammered stuff.

Just now, though, he was heartily sick of the business. He wanted fun, which to him meant the Ulpian Library. As he looked in the mirror, he thought he hadn't changed much inside. He disliked barging in on strangers and bargaining as much as ever. But outside none of his former friends would have known him. He had grown a short reddish beard. This was partly because he had never in his other life shaved with a guardless razor, and it gave him the jitters to do so; and partly because he had always secretly coveted a beard, to balance his oversized nose.

He wore another new tunic, a Byzantine-style thing with ballooning sleeves. The trousers of his tweed suit gave an incongruous effect, but he didn't fancy the short pants of the country, with winter coming on. He also wore a cloak, which was nothing but a big square blanket with a hole in the middle to put his head through. He had hired an old woman to make him socks and underwear.

Altogether he was pretty well pleased with himself. He admitted he had been lucky in finding Thomasus; the Syrian had been an enormous help to him.

He approached the library with much the same visceral tingle that a lover gets from the imminence of a meeting with his beloved. Nor was he disappointed. He felt like shouting when a brief nosing about the shelves showed him Berosus' *Chaldean History,* the complete works of Livius, Tacitus' *History of the Conquest of Britain,* and Cassiodorus' recently published *Gothic History* complete. Here was stuff for which more than one twentieth-century historian or archaeologist would cheerfully commit murder.

For a few minutes he simply dithered, like the proverbial ass between two haystacks. Then he decided that Cassiodorus would have the most valuable information to impart, as it dealt with an environment in which he himself was living. So he lugged the big volumes out and set to work. It was hard work, too, even for a man who knew Latin. The books were written in a semicursive minuscule hand with all the words run together. The incredibly wordy and affected style of the writer didn't bother him as it would have if he had been reading English; he was after facts. "Excuse me, sir," said the librarian, "but is that tall barbarian with the yellow mustache your man?"

"I suppose so," said Padway. "What is it?"

"He's gone to sleep in the Oriental section, and he's snoring so that the readers are complaining."

"I'll tend to him," said Padway.

He went over and awakened Fritharik. "Can't you read?" he asked.

"No," said Fritharik quite simply. "Why should I? When I had my beautiful estate in Africa, there was no occasion."

"Yes, I know all about your beautiful estate, old man. But you'll have to learn to read, or else do your snoring outside."

Fritharik went out somewhat huffily, muttering in his own East German dialect. Padway's guess was that he was calling reading a sissy accomplishment.

When Padway got back to his table, he found an elderly Italian dressed with simple elegance going through his Cassiodorus. The man looked up and said: "I'm sorry; were you reading these?"

"That's all right," said Padway. "I wasn't reading all of them. If you're not using the first volume . . ."

"Certainly, certainly, my dear young man. I ought to warn you, though, to be careful to put it back in its proper place. Scylla cheated of her prey by Jason has no fury like that of our esteemed librarian when people misplace his books. And what, may I ask, do you think of the work of our illustrious praetorian prefect?"

"That depends," said Padway judiciously. "He has a lot of facts you can't get elsewhere. But I prefer my facts straight."

"How do you mean?"

"I mean with less flowery rhetoric."

"Oh, but my dear, dear young man! Here we moderns have at last pro-

duced a historian to rank with the great Livius, and you say you don't like—" He glanced up, lowered his voice, and leaned forward. "Just consider the delicate imagery, the glorious erudition! Such style! Such wit!"

"That's just the trouble. You can't give me Polybius, or even Julius Caesar—"

"Julius Caesar! Why everybody knows *he* couldn't write! They use his *Gallic War* as an elementary Latin text for foreigners! All very well for the skin-clad barbarian, who through the gloomy fastnesses of the northern forests pursues the sanguinary boar and horrid bear. But for cultivated men like ourselves—I ask you, my dear young man! Oh"—he looked embarrassed—"you will understand that in my remarks on foreigners I meant nothing personal. I perceive that you are an outlander, despite your obvious breeding and erudition. Are you by any chance from the fabled land of Hind, with its pearl-decked maidens and its elephants?"

"No, farther away than that," said Padway. He knew he had flushed a literary Roman patrician, of the sort who couldn't ask you to pass the butter without wrapping the request in three puns, four mythological illusions, and a dissertation on the manufacture of butter in ancient Crete. "A place called America. I doubt whether I should ever return, though."

"Ha, how right you are! Why should one live anywhere but in Rome if one can? But perhaps you can tell me of the wonders of far-off China, with its gold paved streets!"

"I can tell you a little about it," said Padway cautiously. "For one thing, the streets aren't gold-paved. In fact they're mostly not paved at all."

"How disappointing! But I dare say that a truthful traveler returning from heaven would pronounce its wonders grossly overrated. We must get together, my excellent young sir. I am Cornelius Anicius."

Evidently, Padway thought, he was expected to know who Cornelius Anicius was. He introduced himself. Ah, he thought, enter romance. A pretty slim dark girl approached, addressed Anicius as "Father," and said that she had not been able to find the Sabellian edition of Persius Flaccus.

"Somebody is using it, no doubt," said Anicius. "Martinus, this is my daughter Dorothea. A veritable pearl from King Khusrau's headdress of a daughter, though I as her father may be prejudiced." The girl smiled sweetly at Padway and excused herself.

Anicius asked: "And now, my dear young man, what is your occupation?"

Without thinking, Padway said he was in business. "Indeed? What sort of business?"

Padway told him. The patrician froze up as he digested the information. He was still polite and smiling, but with a smile of a different sort.

"Well, well, that's interesting. Very interesting. I daresay you'll make a good financial success of your business." He spoke the sentence with a slight diffi-

culty, like a Y.M.C.A. secretary talking about the facts of life. "I suppose we aren't to blame for the callings wherein God stations us. But it's too bad you haven't tried the public service. That is the only way to rise above one's class, and an intelligent young man like you deserves to do so. And now, if you'll excuse me, I'll do some reading."

Padway had been hoping for an invitation to Anicius' house. But now that Anicius knew him to be a mere vulgar manufacturer, no invitation would be forthcoming. Padway looked at his watch; it was nearly lunch time. He went out and awoke Fritharik.

The Vandal yawned. "Find all the books you wanted, Martinus? I was just dreaming of my beautiful estate—"

"To hell with—" barked Padway, then shut his mouth.

"What?" said Fritharik. "Can't I even dream about the time I was rich and respected? That's not very—"

"Nothing, nothing. I didn't mean you."

"I'm glad of that. My one consolation nowadays is my memories. But what are you so angry at, Martinus? You look as if you could bite nails in two."

When there was no answer, he went on: "It must have been something in those books. I'm glad I never learned to read. You get all worked up over things that happened long ago. I'd rather dream about my beaut—*oop!* I'm sorry, boss; I won't mention it again."

Padway and Thomasus the Syrian sat, along with several hundred naked Romans, in the steam room of the Baths of Diocletian. The banker looked around and leered. "I hear that in the old days they let the women into these baths, too. Mixed right in with the men. Of course that was in pagan times; there's nothing like that now."

"Christian morality, no doubt," said Padway dryly.

"Yes," chuckled Thomasus. "We moderns are *such* a moral people. You know what the Empress Theodora used to complain about?"

"Yes," said Padway, and told Thomasus what the empress used to complain about.

"Damn it!" cried Thomasus. "Every time I have a dirty story, either you've heard it, or you know a better one."

Padway didn't see fit to tell the banker that he had read that bit of dirt in a book that hadn't yet been written, namely, the *Anecdotes* by Procopius of Caesarea.

Thomasus went on: "I've got a letter from my cousin Antiochus in Naples. He's in the shipping business. He has news from Constantinople." He paused impressively. "War."

"Between us and the Empire?"

"Between the Goths and the Empire, anyway. They've been carrying on

mysterious dickerings ever since Amalaswentha was killed. Thiudahad has tried to duck responsibility for the murder, but I think our old poet-king has come to the end of his rope."

Padway said, "Watch Dalmatia and Sicily. Before the end of the year—" He stopped.

"Doing a bit of soothsaying?"

"No, just an opinion."

The good eye sparkled at Padway through the steam, very black and very intelligent. "Martinus, just who are you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, there's something about you—I don't know how to put it—not just your funny way of putting things. You produce the most astonishing bits of knowledge, like a magician pulling rabbits out of his cap. And when I try to pump you about your own country or how you came hither, you change the subject."

"Well—" said Padway, wondering just how big a lie to risk. Then he thought at the perfect answer—a truthful one that Thomasus would be sure to misconstrue. "You see, I left my own country in a great hurry."

"Oh. For reasons of health, eh? I don't blame you for being cagy in that case." Thomasus winked.

When they were walking up Long Street toward Padway's house, Thomasus asked how the business was. Padway told him: "Pretty good. The new still will be ready next week. And I sold some copper strip to a merchant leaving for Spain. Right now I'm waiting for the murder."

"The *murder?*"

"Yes, Fritharik and Hannibal Scipio didn't get along. Hannibal's been cockier than ever since he's had a couple of men under him. He rides Fritharik."

"*Rides* him?"

"American vernacular, literally translated. Meaning that he subjects him to constant and subtle ridicule and insult. By the way, I'm going to pay off your loan when we get home."

"Entirely?"

"That's right. The money's in the strong box waiting for you."

"Splendid, my dear Martinus! But won't you need another?"

"I'm not sure," said Padway, who was sure that he would. "I was thinking of expanding my distillery."

"That's a great idea. Of course now that you're established we'll put our loans on a business basis—"

"Meaning?" said Padway.

"Meaning that the rate of interest will have to be adjusted. The normal rate, you know, is much higher—"

"Ha, ha," said Padway. "That's what I thought you had in mind. But now that you know the business is a sure one, you can afford to give me a lower rate."

"*Ai*, Martinus, that's absurd! Is that any way to treat me after all I've done for you?"

"You don't have to lend it if you don't want to. There are other bankers who'd be glad to learn American arithmetic—"

"Listen to him, God! It's robbery! It's extortion! I'll never give in! Go to your other bankers, see if I care!"

Three blocks of argument brought the interest rate down to ten per cent, which Thomasus said was cutting his own heart out and burning it on the altar of friendship.

When Padway had spoken of an impending murder, he had neither been passing off hindsight as foresight, nor trying to be literally prophetic. He was more astonished than Thomasus, when they entered his big workshop, to find Fritharik and Hannibal glaring like a couple of dogs who dislike each other's smell. Hannibal's two assistants were looking on with their backs to the door; thus nobody saw the newcomers.

Hannibal snarled: "What do you mean, you big cottonhead? You lie around all day, too lazy to turn over, and then you dare criticize me—"

"All I said," growled the Vandal in his clumsy, deliberate Latin, "was that the next time I caught you, I'd report it. Well I did, and I'm going to."

"I'll slit your lousy throat if you do!" yelled Hannibal.

Fritharik cast a short but pungent aspersion on the Sicilian's sex life. Hannibal whipped out a dagger and lunged at Fritharik. He moved with rattlesnake speed, but he used the instinctive but tactically unsound overhand stab. Fritharik, who was unarmed, caught his wrist with a smack of flesh on flesh, then lost it as Hannibal dug his point into the Vandal's forearm.

When Hannibal swung his arm up for another stab, Padway arrived and caught his arm. He hauled the little man away from his opponent, and immediately had to hang on for dear life to keep from being stabbed himself. Hannibal was shrieking in Sicilian patois and foaming a little at the mouth. Padway saw that he wanted to kill him. He jerked his face back as the dirty fingernails of Hannibal's left hand raked his nose, which was a target hard to miss!

Then there was a thump, and Hannibal collapsed, dropping his dagger. Padway let him slide to the floor and saw that Nerva, the older of the two assistants, was holding a stool by one leg. It had an happened so quickly that Fritharik was just bending over to pick up a short piece of board for a weapon, and Thomasus and Carbo, the other workman, were still standing just inside the door.

Padway said to Nerva: "I think you're the man for my next foreman. What's this about, Fritharik?"

Fritharik didn't answer, he stalked toward the unconscious Hannibal with plain and fancy murder in his face...

"That's enough, Fritharik!" said Padway sharply. "No more rough stuff, or you're fired, too!" He planted himself in front of the intended victim. "What was he doing?"

The Vandal came to himself. "He was stealing bits of copper from stock and selling them. I tried to get him to stop without telling you; you know how it is, if your fellow employees think you're spying on them . . . Please, boss, let me have one whack at him. I may be a poor exile, but no little Greek catamite—"

Padway refused permission. Thomasus suggested swearing out a complaint and having Hannibal arrested; Padway said no, he didn't want to get mixed up with the law. He did allow Fritharik to send Hannibal, when the Sicilian came to, out the front door with a mighty kick in the fundament. Exit villain, sneering, thought Padway as he watched the ex-foreman slink off.

Fritharik said: "I think that was a mistake, Martinus. I could have sunk his body in the Tiber without anybody's knowing. He'll make trouble for us."

Padway suspected that the last statement was correct. But he merely said: "We'd better bind your arm up. Your whole sleeve is blood-soaked. Julia, get a strip of linen and boil it. Yes, *boil* it!"

CHAPTER IV

Padway had resolved not to let anything distract him from the task of assuring himself a livelihood. Until that was accomplished, he didn't intend to stick his neck out by springing gunpowder or the law of gravitation on the unsuspecting Romans.

But the banker's war talk reminded him that he was, after all, living in a political and cultural as well as an economic world. He had never, in his other life, paid more attention to current events than he had to. And in post-Imperial Rome, with no newspapers or electrical communication, it was even easier to forget about things outside one's immediate orbit.

He was living in the twilight of western classical civilization. The Age of Faith, better known as the Dark Ages, was closing down. Europe would be in darkness, from a scientific and technological aspect, for nearly a thousand years. That aspect was, to Padway's naturally prejudiced mind, the most, if not the only, important aspect of a civilization. Of course, the people among whom he was living had no conception of what was happening to them. The process was too slow to observe directly, even over the span of a lifetime. They took their environment for granted, and even bragged about their modernity.

So what? Could one man change the course of history to the extent of preventing this interregnum? One man had changed the course of history before. Maybe. A Carlylean would say yes. A Tolstoyan or Marxist would say no; the environment fixes the pattern of a man's accomplishments and throws up the man to fit that pattern. Fancredi had expressed it differently by calling history a tough web, which would take a huge effort to distort.

How would one man go about it? Invention was the mainspring of technological development. But even in his own time, the lot of the professional inventor had been hard, without the handicap of a powerful and suspicious

ecclesiasticism. And how much could he accomplish by simply "inventing," even if he escaped the unwelcome attentions of the pious? The arts of distilling and metal rolling were launched, no doubt, and so were Arabic numerals. But there was so much to be done, and only one lifetime to do it in.

What then? Business? He was already in it; the upper classes were contemptuous of it; and he was not naturally a businessman, though he could hold his own well enough in competition with these sixth century yaps. Politics? In an age when victory went to the sharpest knife, and no moral rules of conduct were observable? *Br-r-r-r!*

How to prevent darkness from falling?

The Empire might have been together longer if it had had better means of communication. But the Empire, at least in the west, was hopelessly smashed, with Italy, Gaul, and Spain under the muscular thumbs of their barbarian "garrisons."

The answer was *Rapid communication and the multiple record*—that is, printing. Not even the most diligently destructive barbarian can extirpate the written word from a culture wherein the *minimum* edition of most books is fifteen hundred copies. There are just too many books.

So he would be a printer. The web might be tough, but maybe it had never been attacked by a Martin Padway.

"Good morning, my dear Martinus," said Thomasus. "How is the copper-rolling business?"

"So-so. The local smiths are pretty well stocked with strip, and not many of the shippers are interested in paying my prices for such a heavy commodity. But I think I'll clean up that last note in a few weeks."

"I'm glad to hear that. What will you do then?"

"That's what I came to see you about. Who's publishing books in Rome now?"

"Books? Books? Nobody, unless you count the copyists who replace worn-out copies for the libraries. There are a couple of bookstores down in the Agiletum, but their stock is all imported. The last man who tried to run a publishing business in Rome went broke years ago. Not enough demand, and not enough good authors. You're not thinking of going into it, I hope?"

"Yes, I am. I'll make money at it, too."

"What? You're crazy, Martinus. Don't consider it. I don't want to see you go broke after making such a fine start."

"I shan't go broke. But I'll need some capital to start."

"What? Another loan? But I've just told you that nobody can make money publishing in Rome. It's a proven fact. I won't lend you an as on such a harebrained scheme. How much do you think you'd need?"

"About five hundred solidi."

"*Ai, ai!* You've gone mad, my boy! What would you need such a lot for? All you have to do is buy or hire a couple of scribes—"

Padway grinned. "Oh, no. That's the point. It takes a scribe months to copy out a work like Cassiodorus' *Gothic History* by hand, and that's only one copy. No wonder a work like that costs fifty solidi per copy! I can build a machine that will turn out five hundred or a thousand copies in a few weeks, to retail for five or ten solidi. But it will take time and money to build the machine and teach an operator how to run it."

"But that's real money! God, are You listening? Well, please make my misguided young friend listen to reason! For the last time, Martinus, I won't consider it! How does the machine work?"

If Padway had known the travail that was in store for him, he might have been less confident about the possibilities of starting a printshop in a world that knew neither printing presses, type, printer's ink, nor paper. Writing ink was available, and so was papyrus. But it didn't take Padway long to decide that these would be impractical for his purposes.

His press, seemingly the most formidable job, proved the easiest. A carpenter down in the warehouse district promised to knock one together for him in a few weeks, though he manifested a not unnatural curiosity as to what Padway proposed to do with the contraption. Padway wouldn't tell him.

"It's not like any press I ever saw," said the man. "It doesn't look like a felt press. I know! You're the city's new executioner, and this is a newfangled torture instrument! Why didn't you want to tell me, boss? It's a perfectly respectable trade! But say, how about giving me a pass to the torture chamber the first time you use it? I want to be sure my work holds up, you know!"

For a bed they used a piece sawn off the top of a section of a broken marble column and mounted on wheels. All Padway's instincts revolted at this use of a monument of antiquity, but he consoled himself with the thought that one column mattered less than the art of printing.

For type, he contracted with a seal cutter to cut him a set of brass type. He had, at first, been appalled to discover that he would need ten to twelve thousand of the little things, since he could hardly build a type-casting machine, and would therefore have to print directly from the types. He had hoped to be able to print in Greek and Gothic as well as in Latin, but the Latin types alone set him back a round two hundred solidi. And the first sample set that the seal cutter ran off had the letters facing the wrong way and had to be melted up again. The type was what a twentieth-century printer would have called fourteen-point Gothic, and an engraver would have called sans-serif. With such big type he would not be able to get much copy on a page, but it would at least, he hoped, be legible.

Padway shrank from the idea of making his own paper. He had only a hazy idea of how it was done, except that it was a complicated process. Papyrus was

too glossy and brittle, and the supply in Rome was meager and uncertain.

There remained vellum. Padway found that one of the tanneries across the Tiber turned out small quantities as a side line. It was made from the skins of sheep and goats by extensive scraping, washing, stretching, and paring. The price seemed reasonable. Padway rather staggered the owner of the tannery by ordering a thousand sheets at one crack.

He was fortunate in knowing that printer's ink was based on linseed oil and lampblack. It was no great trick to buy a bag of flaxseed and run it through a set of rolls like those he used for copper rolling, and to rig up a contraption consisting of an oil lamp, a water filled bowl suspended and revolved over it, and a scraper for removing the lampblack. The only thing wrong with the resulting ink was that it wouldn't print. That is, it either made no impression or came off the type in shapeless gobs.

Padway was getting nervous about his finances; his five hundred solidi were getting low, and this seemed a cruel joke. His air of discouragement became so obvious that he caught his workers remarking on it behind their hands. But he grimly set out to experiment on his ink. Sure enough, he found that with a little soap in it, it would work fairly well.

In the middle of February Nevitta, Grummund's son wandered in through the raw drizzle. When Fritharik showed him in, the Goth slapped Padway on the back so hard as to send him halfway across the room. "Well, well!" he bellowed. "Somebody gave me some of that terrific drink you've been selling, and I remembered your name. So I thought I'd look you up. Say, you got yourself well established in record time, for a stranger. Pretty smart young man, eh? Ha, ha!"

"Would you like to look around?" invited Padway. "Only I'll have to ask you to keep my methods confidential. There's no law here protecting ideas, so I have to keep my things secret until I'm ready to make them public property."

"Sure, you can trust me. I wouldn't understand how your devices work anyhow."

In the machine shop, Nevitta was fascinated by a crude wire-drawing machine that Padway had rigged up. "Isn't that pretty?" he said, picking up the roll of brass wire. "I'd like to buy some for my wife. It would make nice bracelets and earrings."

Padway hadn't anticipated that use of his products, but said he would have some ready in a week.

"Where do you get your power?" asked Nevitta.

Padway showed him the workhorse in the back yard, walking around a shaft in the rain.

"Shouldn't think a horse would be efficient," said the Goth. "You could get a lot more power out of a couple of husky slaves. That is, if your driver knew his whip. Ha, ha!"

"Oh, no," said Padway. "Not this horse. Notice anything peculiar about his harness?"

"Well, yes, it *is* peculiar. But I don't know what's wrong with it."

"It's that collar over his neck. You people make your horses pull against a strap around the throat.

"Every time he pulls, the strap cuts into his windpipe and shuts off the poor animal's breath. That collar puts the load on his shoulders. If you were going to pull a load, you wouldn't hitch a rope around your neck to pull it with, would you?"

"Well," said Nevitta dubiously, "maybe you're right. I've been using my kind of harness for a long time, and I don't know that I'd care to change."

Padway shrugged. "Any time you want one of these outfits, you can get it from Metellus the Saddler on the Appian Way. He made this to my specifications. I'm not making them myself; I have too much else to do."

Here Padway leaned against the doorframe and closed his eyes.

"Aren't you feeling well?" asked Nevitta in alarm.

"No. My head weighs as much as the dome of the Pantheon. I think I'm going to bed."

"Oh, my word, I'll help you. Where's that man of mine? *Hermann!*" When Hermann appeared, Nevitta rattled a sentence of Gothic at him wherein Padway caught the name of Leo Vekkos.

Padway protested: "I don't want a physician—"

"Nonsense, my boy, it's no trouble. You were right about keeping the dogs outside. It cured my wheezes. So I'm glad to help you."

Padway feared the ministrations of a sixth-century physician more than he feared the grippe with which he was coming down. He did not know how to refuse gracefully. Nevitta and Fritharik got him to bed with rough efficiency.

Fritharik said: "It looks to me like a clear case of elf-shot."

"What?" croaked Padway.

"Elf-shot. The elves have shot you. I know, because I had it once in Africa. A Vandal physician cured me by drawing out the invisible darts of the elves. When they become visible they are little arrowheads made of chipped flint."

"Look," said Padway, "I know what's wrong with me. If everybody will let me alone, I'll get well in a week or ten days."

"We couldn't think of that!" cried Nevitta and Fritharik together. While they were arguing, Hermann arrived with a sallow, black-bearded, sensitive-looking man.

Leo Vekkos opened his bag. Padway got a glimpse into the bag, and shuddered. It contained a couple of books, an assortment of weeds, and several small bottles holding organs of what had probably been small mammals.

"Now then, excellent Martinus," said Vekkos, "let me see your tongue. Say ah." The physician felt Padway's forehead, poked his chest and stomach, and

asked him intelligent-sounding questions about his condition.

"This is a common condition in winter," said Vekkos in a didactic tone. "It is something of a mystery. Some hold it to be an excess of blood in the head, which causes that stuffy feeling whereof you complain. Others assert that it is an excess of black bile. I hold the view that it is caused by the conflict of the natural spirits of the liver with the animal spirits of the nervous system. The defeat of the animal spirits naturally reacts on the respiratory system—"

"It's nothing but a bad cold—" said Padway.

Vekkos ignored him. "—since the lungs and throat are under their control. The best cure for you is to rouse the vital spirits of the heart to put the natural spirits in their place." He began fishing weeds out of the bag.

"How about elf-shot?" asked Fritharik.

"What?"

Fritharik explained the medical doctrine of his people.

Vekkos smiled. "My good man, there is nothing in Galen about elf-shot. Nor in Celsus. Nor in Asclepiades. So I cannot take you seriously—"

"Then you don't know much about doctoring," growled Fritharik.

"Really," snapped Vekkos. "Who is the physician?"

"Stop squabbling, or you'll make me worse," grumbled Padway. "What are you going to do to me?"

Vekkos held up a bunch of weeds. "Have these herbs stewed and drink a cupful every three hours, They include a mild purgative, to draw off the black bile through the bowels in case there should be an excess,"

"Which is the purgative?" asked Padway.

Vekkos pulled it out. Padway's thin arm shot out and grabbed the weed. "I just want to keep this separate from the rest, if you don't mind."

Vekkos humored him, told him to keep warm and stay in bed, and departed. Nevitta and Hermann went with him. .

"Calls himself a physician," grumbled Fritharik, "Had never heard of elf-shot."

"Get Julia," said Padway.

When the girl came, she set up a great to-do: "Oh, generous master, whatever is wrong with you? I'll get Father Narcissus—"

"No, you won't," said Padway. He broke off a small part of the purgative weed and handed it to her. "Boil this in a kettle of water, and bring me a cup of the water." He handed her the rest of the bunch of greenery. "And throw these out. Somewhere where the medicine man won't see them."

A slight laxative should be just the thing, he thought. If they would only leave him alone . . .

Next morning his head was less thick, but he felt very tired. He slept until eleven, when he was wakened by Julia. With Julia was a dignified man wearing an ordinary civilian cloak over a long white tunic with tight sleeves. Padway guessed that he was Father Narcissus by his tonsure.

"My son," said the priest. "I am sorry to see that the Devil had set his henchmen on you. This virtuous young woman besought my spiritual aid . . ."

Padway resisted a desire to tell Father Narcissus where to go. His one constant principle was to avoid trouble with the Church.

"I have not seen you at the Church of the Angel Gabriel," continued Father Narcissus. "You are one of us, though, I hope?"

"American rite," mumbled Padway.

The priest was puzzled by this. But he went on. "I know that you have consulted the physician Vekkos. How much better it is to put your trust in God, compared to whose power these bleeders and stewers of herbs are impotent! We shall start with a few prayers . . ."

Padway lived through it. Then Julia appeared stirring something.

"Don't be alarmed," said the priest. "This is one cure that never fails. Dust from the tomb of St. Nereus, mixed with water."

There was nothing obviously lethal about the combination, so Padway drank it. Father Narcissus asked conversationally: "You are not, then, from Padua?"

Fritharik put his head in. "That so-called physician is here again."

"Tell him just a moment," said Padway. God, he was tired. "Thanks a lot, Father. It's nice to have seen you."

The priest went out, shaking his head over the blindness of mortals who trusted in *materia medica.*

Vekkos came in with an accusing look. Padway said: "Don't blame me. The girl brought him."

Vekkos sighed. "We physicians spend our lives in hard scientific study, and then we have to compete with these alleged miracle-workers. Well, how's my patient today?"

While he was still examining Padway, Thomasus the Syrian appeared. The banker waited around nervously until the Greek left. Then Thomasus said: "I came as soon as I heard you were sick, Martinus. Prayers and medicines are all very well, but we don't want to miss any bets. My colleague, Ebenezer the Jew, knows a man, one of his own sect named Jeconias of Naples, who is pretty good at curative magic. A lot of these magicians are frauds; I don't believe in them for a minute. But this man has done some remarkable—"

"I don't want him," groaned Padway. "I'll be all right if everybody will stop trying to cure me . . ."

"I brought him along, Martinus. Now do be reasonable. He won't hurt you. And I couldn't afford to have you die with those notes outstanding—of course that's not the only consideration; I'm fond of you personally . . ."

Padway felt like one in the grip of a nightmare. The more he protested, the more quacks they sicced on him.

Jeconias of Naples was a little fat man with a bouncing manner, more like a high-pressure salesman than the conventional picture of a magician.

He chanted: "Now, just leave everything to me, excellent Martinus. Here's a little cantrip that'll scare off the weaker spirits." He pulled out a piece of papyrus and read off something in an unknown langŭage. "There, that didn't hurt, did it? Just leave it all to old Jeconias. He knows what he's doing. Now we'll put this charm under the bed, so-o-o! There, don't you feel better already? Now we'll cast your horoscope. If you'll give me the date and hour of your birth . . ."

How the hell, thought Padway, could he explain to this damned little quack that he was going to be born 1,373 years hence? He threw his reserve to the winds. He heaved himself up in bed and shouted feebly: "Presumptuous slave, know you not that I am one of the hereditary custodians of the Seal of Solomon? That I can shuffle your silly planets around the sky with a word, and put out the sun with a sentence? And you talk of casting *my* horoscope?"

The magician's eyes were popping. "I—I'm sorry, sir, I didn't know . . ."

"Shemkhamphoras!" yelled Padway. "Asthoroth! Baal-Marduk! St. Frigidaire! Tippecanoe and Tyler too! Begone, worm! One word from you of my true identity, and I'll strike you down with the foulest form of leprosy! Your eyeballs will rot, your fingers will drop off joint by joint—" But Jeconias was already out the door. Padway could hear him negotiate the first half of the stairway three steps at a time, roll head over heels the rest of the way, and race out of the front door.

Padway chuckled. He told Fritharik, who had been attracted by the noise: "You park yourself at the door with your sword, and say that Vekkos has given orders to let nobody see me. And I mean *nobody.* Even if the Holy Ghost shows up, keep him out."

Fritharik did as ordered. Then he craned his neck around the doorframe. "Excellent boss! I found a Goth who knows the theory of elf-shot. Shall I have him come up and—"

Padway pulled the covers over his head.

It was now April, 536. Sicily had fallen to General Belisarius in December. Padway had heard this weeks after it happened. Except for business errands, he had hardly been outside his house in four months in his desperate anxiety to get his press going. And except for his workers and his business contacts he knew practically nobody in Rome, though he had a speaking acquaintance with the librarians and two of Thomasus' banker friends, Ebenezer the Jew and Vardan the Armenian.

The day the press was finally ready he called his workers together and said: "I suppose you know that this is likely to be an important day for us. Fritharik will give each of you a small bottle of brandy to take home when you leave. And the first man who drops a hammer or anything on those little brass letters gets fired. I hope none of you do, because you've done a

good job and I'm proud of you. That's all."

* * *

"Well, well," said Thomasus, "that's splendid. I always knew you'd get your machine to run. Said so right from the start. What are you going to print? The *Gothic History?* That would flatter the pretorian prefect, no doubt."

"No. That would take months to run off, especially as my men are new at the job. I'm starting off with a little alphabet book. You know, A is for *asinus* (ass), B is for *braccae* (breeches), and so on."

"That sounds like a good idea. But, Martinus, can't you let your men handle it, and take a rest? You look as if you haven't had a good night's sleep in months."

"I haven't, to tell the truth. But I can't leave; every time something goes wrong I have to be there to fix it. And I've got to find outlets for this first book. Schoolmasters and such people. I have to do everything myself, sooner or later. Also, I have an idea for another kind of publication."

"What? Don't tell me you're going to start another wild scheme—"

"Now, now, don't get excited, Thomasus. This is a weekly booklet of news."

"Listen, Martinus, don't overreach yourself. You'll get the scribes' guild down on you. As it is, I wish you'd tell me more about yourself. You're the town's great mystery, you know. Everybody asks about you."

"You just tell them I'm the most uninteresting bore you ever met in your life."

There were only a little over a hundred freelance scribes in Rome. Padway disarmed any hostility they might have had for him by the curious expedient of enlisting them as reporters. He made a standing offer of a couple of sesterces per story for acceptable accounts of news items.

When he came to assemble the copy for his first issue, he found that some drastic censorship was necessary. For instance, one story read:

> Our depraved and licentious city governor, Count Honorius, was seen early Wednesday morning being pursued down Broad Way by a young woman with a butcher's cleaver. Because this cowardly wretch was not encumbered by a decent minimum of clothing, he outdistanced his pursuer. This is the fourth time in a month that the wicked and corrupt count has created a scandal by his conduct with women. It is rumored that King Thiudahad will be petitioned to remove him by a committee of the outraged fathers of daughters whom he has dishonored. It is to be hoped that the next time the diabolical count is chased with a cleaver, his pursuer will catch him.

Somebody, thought Padway, doesn't *like* our illustrious count. He didn't know

Honorius, but whether the story was true or not, there was no free-press clause in the Italian constitutions between Padway and the city's torture chambers.

So the first eight-page issue said nothing about young women with cleavers. It had a lot of relatively innocuous news items, one short poem contributed by a scribe who fancied himself a second Ovid, an editorial by Padway in which he said briefly that he hoped the Romans would find his paper useful, and a short article—also by Padway—on the nature and habits of the elephant.

Padway turned the crackling sheepskin pages of the proof copy, was proud of himself and his men, a pride not much diminished by the immediate discovery of a number of glaring typographical errors. One of these, in a story about a Roman mortally wounded by robbers on High Path a few nights back, had the unfortunate effect of turning a harmless word into an obscene one. Oh, well, with only two hundred and fifty copies he could have somebody go through them and correct the error with pen and ink.

Still, he could not help being a little awed by the importance of Martin Padway in this world. But for pure good luck, it might have been he who had been fatally stabbed on High Path—and behold, no printing press, none of the inventions he might yet introduce, until the slow natural process of technical development prepared the way for them. Not that he deserved too much credit—Gutenberg ought to have some for the press, for instance.

Padway called his paper *Tempora Romae* and offered it at ten sesterces, about the equivalent of fifty cents. He was surprised when not only did the first issue sell out, but Fritharik was busy for three days turning away from his door people who wanted copies that were not to be had.

A few scribes dropped in every day with more news items. One of them, a plump cheerful-looking fellow about Padway's age, handed in a story beginning:

> The blood of an innocent man has been sacrificed to the lusts of our vile monster of a city governor, Count Honorius.
>
> Reliable sources have revealed that Q. Aurelius Galba, crucified on a charge of murder last week, was the husband of a wife who had long been adulterously coveted by our villainous count. At Galba's trial there was much comment among the spectators on the flimsiness of the evidence...

"Hey!" said Padway. "Aren't you the man who handed in that other story about Honorius and a cleaver?"

"That's right," said the scribe. "I wondered why you didn't publish it."

"How long do you think I'd be allowed to run my paper without interference if I did?"

"Oh, I never thought of that."

"Well, remember next time. I can't use this story either. But don't let it discourage you. It's well done; a lead sentence and everything. How do you get all this information?"

The man grinned. "I hear things. And what I don't hear, my wife does. She has women friends who get together for games of backgammon, and they talk."

"It's too bad I don't dare run a gossip column," said Padway. "But you would seem to have the makings of a newspaper man. What's your name?"

"George Menandrus."

"That's Greek, isn't it?"

"My parents were Greek; I am Roman."

"All right, George, keep in touch with me. Someday I may want to hire an assistant to help run the thing."

Padway confidently visited the tanner to place another order for vellum.

"When will you want it?" said the tanner. Padway told him in four days.

"That's impossible. I might have fifty sheets for you in that time. They'll cost you five times as much apiece as the first ones."

Padway gasped. "In God's name, why?"

"You practically cleaned out Rome's supply with that first order," said the tanner. "All of our stock, and all the rest that was floating around, which I went out and bought up for you. There aren't enough skins left in the whole city to make a hundred sheets. And making vellum takes time, you know. If you buy up the last fifty sheets, it will be weeks before I can prepare another large batch."

Padway asked: "If you expanded your plant do you suppose you could eventually get up to a capacity of two thousand a week?"

The tanner shook his head. "I should not want to spend the money to expand in such a risky business. And if I did, there wouldn't be enough animals in Central Italy to supply the demand."

Padway recognized when he was licked. Vellum was essentially a by-product of the sheep-and-goat industry. Therefore a sudden increase in demand would skyrocket the price without much increasing the output. Though the Romans knew next to nothing of economics, the law of supply and demand worked here just the same.

It would have to be paper after all. And his second edition was going to be very, very late.

For paper, he got hold of a felter and told him that he wanted him to chop up a few pounds of white cloth and make them into the thinnest felt that anybody had ever heard of. The felter dutifully produced a sheet of what looked like exceptionally thick and fuzzy blotting paper. Padway patiently insisted on finer breaking up of the cloth, on a brief boiling before felting, and on pressing after. As he went out of the shop he saw the felter tap his forehead significantly. But after many trials the man presented him with a paper not much worse for writing than a twentieth-century paper towel.

Then came the heartbreaking part. A drop of ink applied to this paper spread out with the alacrity of a picnic party that has discovered a rattlesnake in their midst. So Padway told the felter to make up ten more sheets, and into the mush from which each was made to introduce one common substance—soap, olive oil, and so forth. At this point the felter threatened to quit, and had to be appeased by a raise in price.

Padway was vastly relieved to discover that a little clay mixed with the pulp made all the difference between a fair writing paper and an impossible one.

By the time Padway's second issue had been sold out, he had ceased to worry about the possibility of running out of paper. But another thought moved into the vacated worrying compartment in his mind: What should he do when the Gothic War really got going? In his own history it had raged for twenty years up and down Italy. Nearly every important town had been besieged or captured at least once. Rome itself would be practically depopulated by sieges, famine, and pestilence. If he lived long enough he might see the Lombard invasion and the near-extinction of Italian civilization. All this would interfere dreadfully with his plans.

He tried to shake off the mood. Probably the weather was responsible; it had rained steadily for two days. Everything in the house was dank. The only way to cure that would be to build a fire, and the air was too warm for that already. So Padway sat and looked out at the leaden landscape.

He was surprised when Fritharik brought in Thomasus' colleague, Ebenezer the Jew. Ebenezer was a frail-looking, kindly oldster with a long white beard. Padway found him distressingly pious; when he ate with the other bankers he did not eat at all, to put it Irishly, for fear of transgressing one of the innumerable rules of his sect.

Ebenezer took his cloak off over his head and asked: "Where can I put this where it won't drip, excellent Martinus? Ah. Thank you. I was this way on business, and I thought I'd look your place over, if I may. It must be interesting, from Thomasus' accounts." He wrung the water from his beard.

Padway was glad of something to take his mind off the ominous future. He showed the old man around.

Ebenezer looked at him from under bushy white eyebrows. "Ah. Now I can believe that you are from a far country. From another world, almost. Take that system of arithmetic of yours; it has changed our whole concept of banking—"

"What?" cried Padway. "What do you know about it?"

"Why," said Ebenezer, "Thomasus sold the secret to Vardan and me. I thought you knew that."

"He *did?* How much?"

"A hundred and fifty solidi apiece. Didn't you—" Padway growled a resounding Latin oath, grabbed his hat and cloak, and started for the door.

"Where are you going, Martinus?" said Ebenezer in alarm.

"I'm going to tell that cutthroat what I think of him!" snapped Padway. "And then I'm going to—"

"Did Thomasus promise you not to reveal the secret? I cannot believe that he violated—"

Padway stopped with his hand on the door handle. Now that he thought, the Syrian had never agreed not to tell anybody about Arabic numerals. Padway had taken it for granted that he would not want to do so. But if Thomasus got pressed for ready cash, there was no legal impediment to his selling or giving the knowledge to whom he pleased.

As Padway got his anger under control, he saw that he had not really lost anything, since his original intention had been to spread Arabic numerals far and wide. What really peeved him was that Thomasus should chisel such a handsome sum out of the science without even offering Padway a cut. It was like Thomasus. He was all right, but as Nevitta had said you had to watch him.

When Padway did appear at Thomasus' house, later that day, he had Fritharik with him. Fritharik was carrying a strong box. The box was nicely heavy with gold.

"Martinus," cried Thomasus, a little appalled, "do you really want to pay off all your loans? Where did you get all this money?"

"You heard me," grinned Padway. "Here's an accounting of principal and interest. I'm tired of paying ten per cent when I can get the same for seven and a half."

"What? Where can you get any such absurd rate?"

"From your esteemed colleague, Ebenezer. Here's a copy of the new note."

"Well, I must say I wouldn't have expected that of Ebenezer. If all this is true, I suppose I could meet his rate."

"You'll have to better it, after what you made from selling my arithmetic."

"Now, Martinus, what I did was strictly legal—"

"Didn't say it wasn't."

"Oh, very well. I suppose God planned it this way. I'll give you seven and four tenths."

Padway laughed scornfully.

"Seven, then. But that's the lowest, absolutely, positively, finally."

When Padway had received his old notes, a receipt for the old loans, and a copy of the new note, Thomasus asked him, "How did you get Ebenezer to offer you such an unheard-of figure?"

Padway smiled. "I told him that he could have had the secret of the new arithmetic from me for the asking."

Padway's next effort was a clock. He was going to begin with the simplest design possible: a weight on the end of a rope, a ratchet, a train of gears, the

hand and dial from a battered old clepsydra or water clock he picked up secondhand, a pendulum, and an escapement. One by one he assembled these parts—all but the last.

He had not supposed there was anything so difficult about making an escapement. He could take the back cover off his wristwatch and see the escapement-wheel there, jerking its merry way around. He did not want to take his watch apart for fear of never getting it together again. Besides, the parts thereof were too small to reproduce accurately.

But he could *see* the damned thing; why couldn't he make a large one? The workmen turned out several wheels, and the little tongs to go with them. Padway filed and scraped and bent. But they would not work. The tongs caught the teeth of the wheels and stuck fast. Or they did not catch at all, so that the shaft on which the rope was wound unwound itself all at once. Padway at last got one of the contraptions adjusted so that if you swung the pendulum with your hand, the tongs would let the escapement-wheel revolve one tooth at a time. Fine. But the clock would not run under its own power. Take your hand off the pendulum, and it made a couple of half-hearted swings and stopped.

Padway said to hell with it. He'd come back to it some day when he had more time and better tools and instruments. He stowed the mess of cog-wheels in a corner of his cellar. Perhaps, he thought, this failure had been a good thing, to keep him from getting an exaggerated idea of his own cleverness.

Nevitta popped in again. "All over your sickness, Martinus? Fine; I knew you had a strong constitution. How about coming out to the Flaminian race-track with me now and losing a few solidi? Then come on up to the farm overnight."

"I'd like to a lot. But I have to put the *Times* to bed this afternoon."

"Put to bed?" queried Nevitta.

Padway explained..

Nevitta said: "I see. Ha, ha, I thought you had a girl friend named Tempora. Tomorrow for supper, then."

"How shall I get there?"

"You haven't a saddle horse? I'll send Hermann down with one tomorrow afternoon. But mind, I don't want to get him back with wings growing out of his shoulders!"

"It might attract attention," said Padway solemnly. "And you'd have a hell of a time catching him if he didn't want to be bridled."

So the next afternoon Padway, in a new pair of rawhide Byzantine jack boots, set out with Hermann up the Flamian Way. The Roman Campagna, he noted, was still fairly prosperous farming country. He wondered how long it would take for it to become the desolate, malarial plain of the Middle Ages.

"How were the races?" he asked.

Hermann, it seemed, knew very little Latin, though that little was still

better than Padway's Gothic. "Oh, my boss . . . he terrible angry. He talk . . . you know . . . hot sport. But hate lose money. Lose fifty sesterces on horse. Make noise like . . . you know . . . lion with gut-ache."

At the farmhouse Padway met Nevitta's wife, a pleasant, plump woman who spoke no Latin, and her eldest son, Dagalaif, a Gothic *scaio,* or marshal, home on vacation. Supper fully bore out the stories that Padway had heard about Gothic appetites. He was agreeably surprised to drink some fairly good beer, after the bilgewater that went by that name in Rome.

"I've got some wine, if you prefer it," said Nevitta.

"Thanks, but I'm getting a little tired of Italian wine. The Roman writers talk a lot about their different kinds, but it all tastes alike to me."

"That's the way I feel. If you really want some, have some perfumed Greek wine."

Padway shuddered.

Nevitta grinned. "That's the way I feel. Any man who'd put perfume in his liquor probably swishes when he walks. I only keep the stuff for my Greek friends, like Leo Vekkos. Reminds me, I must tell him about your cure for my wheezes by having me put my dogs out. He'll figure out some fancy theory full of long words to explain it."

Dagalaif spoke up: "Say, Martinus, maybe you have inside information on how the war will go."

Padway shrugged. "All I know is what everybody else knows. I haven't a private wire—I mean a private channel of information to heaven. If you want a guess, I'd say that Belisarius would invade Bruttium this summer and besiege Naples by August. He won't have a large force, but he'll be infernally hard to beat."

Dagalaif said: "Huh! We'll let him up all right. A handful of Greeks won't get very far against the united Gothic nation."

"That's what the Vandals thought," answered Padway dryly.

"*Aiw,*" said Dagalaif. "But we won't make the mistakes the Vandals made."

"I don't know, son," said Nevitta. "It seems to me we are making them already—or others just as bad. This king of ours—all he's good for is horn-swoggling his neighbors out of land and writing Latin poetry. And digging around in libraries. It would be better if we had an illiterate one, like Theoderik. Of course," he added apologetically, "I admit I can read and write. My old man came from Pannonia with Theoderik, and he was always talking about the sacred duty of the Goths to preserve Roman civilization from savages like the Franks. He was determined that I would have a Latin education if it killed me. I admit I've found my education useful. But in the next few months it'll be more important for our leader to know how to lead a charge than to say *amo-amas-amat.*"

CHAPTER V

Padway returned to Rome in the best of humor. Nevitta was the first person, besides Thomasus the Syrian, who had asked him to his house. And Padway, despite his somewhat cool exterior, was a sociable fellow at heart. He was in fact, so elated that after he dismounted he handed the reins of the borrowed horse to Hermann without noticing the three rough-looking parties leaning against the new fence in front of the old house on Long Street.

When Padway headed for the gate, the largest of the three, a black-bearded man, stepped in front of him. The man was holding a sheet of paper—real paper, no doubt from the felter to whom Padway had taught the art—and reading out loud to himself—"medium height, brown hair and eyes, large nose, short beard. Speaks with an accent." He looked up sharply. "Are you Martinus Paduei?"

"Sic. Quis est?"

"You're under arrest. Will you come along quietly?"

"*What?* Who—What for—"

"Order of the municipal Prefect Charge of Sorcery."

"But . . . but—*Hey!* You can't—"

"I said *quietly*."

The other two men had moved up on each side of Padway, and each took an arm and started to walk him along the street. When he resisted, a short bludgeon appeared in the hand of one. Padway looked around frantically. Hermann was already out of sight. Fritharik was not to be seen; no doubt he was snoring as usual. Padway filled his lungs to shout; the man on his right tightened his grip and raised the bludgeon threateningly. Padway didn't shout.

They marched him down the Argiletum to the old jail below the Record

Office on the Capitoline. He was still in somewhat of a daze as the clerk demanded his name, age, and address. All he could think of was that he had heard somewhere that you were entitled to telephone your lawyer before being locked up. And that information seemed hardly useful under the present circumstances.

A small, snapping Italian who had been lounging on a bench got up. "What's this, a sorcery case involving a foreigner? Sounds like a national case to me."

"Oh, no, it isn't," said the clerk. "You national officers have authority in Rome only in mixed Roman-Gothic cases. This man isn't a Goth; says he's an American, whatever that is."

"Yes, it is! Read your regulations. The praetorian prefect's office has jurisdiction over all capital cases involving foreigners. If you have a sorcery complaint, you turn it and the prisoner over to us. Come on, now." The little man moved possessively toward Padway who paled at the term "capital cases."

The clerk continued arguing with the policeman: "Don't be a fool. Think you're going to drag him clear up to Ravenna for interrogation? We've got a perfectly good torture chamber here."

"I'm only doing my duty," snapped the state policeman. He grabbed Padway's arm and started to haul him toward the door. "Come along now, sorcerer. We'll show you some real, up-to-date torture at Ravenna. These Roman cops don't know anything."

"*Christus!* Are you crazy?" yelled the clerk. He jumped up and grabbed Padway's other arm, as did the black-bearded man who had arrested him. As the state policemen pulled, so did the other two.

"Hey!" yelled Padway. But the assorted functionaries were too engrossed in their tug-of-war to notice.

The state policeman shouted in a penetrating voice: "Justinius, run and tell the adjutant prefect that these municipal scum are trying to withhold a prisoner from us!"

As the man ran out the door, another door opened, and a fat, sleepy-looking man came in. "What's this?" he squeaked.

For a moment the clerk and the municipal policeman stood at attention, releasing Padway. Then, as the state policeman resumed hauling him toward the door; the local cops abandoned their etiquette and grabbed him again. They all shouted at once at the fat man who Padway inferred was the municipal *commentariensius*, or police chief.

At that two more municipal policeman came in with a thin, ragged prisoner. They entered into the dispute with true Italian fervor, which meant using both hands. The ragged prisoner promptly darted out the door and his captors didn't notice his absence for a full minute.

They then began shouting at each other. "What did you let him go for?" "You brass-bound idiot, you're the one who let him go!"

Just then the man called Justinius came back with an elegant person who announced himself as the *corniculatis,* or adjutant prefect. This individual waved a perfumed handkerchief at the noisy, struggling group and said: "Let him go, you chaps. Yes, you, too, Sulla. There won't be anything left of him to interrogate if you keep this up."

From the speed with which the others in the now-crowded room quieted, Padway guessed that the adjutant prefect was a pretty big shot.

The adjutant prefect asked a few questions, then said: "I'm sorry, my dear old *commentariensius,* but I'm afraid he's our man."

"Not yet he isn't," squeaked the police chief. "You fellows can't just walk in here and grab a prisoner any time you feel like it. It would cost me my job to let you have him."

The adjutant prefect yawned. "Dear, dear, you're *such* a bore. You forget that I represent the praetorian prefect, who represents the king, and if I order you to hand the prisoner over, you hand him over and that's the end of it. I so order you, now."

"Go ahead and order. You'll have to take him by force, and I've got more force than you have." The chief beamed Billiken-like and twiddled his thumbs. "Clodianus, go fetch our illustrious city governor, if he's not too busy. We'll see whether we have authority over our own jail." The clerk departed. "Of course," the chief continued, "we *might* use Solomon's method."

"You mean cut him in two?" asked the adjutant prefect with a grin.

"Lord Jesus, that would be funny, wouldn't it? Ho, ho, ho!" The chief laughed shrilly until the tears ran down his face. "Would you prefer the head end or the legs? Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!" He rocked on his seat.

As the other municipal officers laughed dutifully, the adjutant prefect permitted himself a wan, bored smile. Padway thought the chief's humor in questionable taste.

Eventually the clerk returned with the city governor. Count Honorius wore a tunic with the two purple stripes of a Roman senator, and walked with such a carefully measured tread that Padway wondered if his footsteps hadn't been laid out ahead of time with chalk marks. He had a square jaw and all the warmth of expression of a snapping turtle.

"What," he asked in a voice like a steel file, "is this all about? Quick, now, I'm a busy man." As he spoke, the little wattle under his jaw wobbled in a way that reminded Padway more than ever of a snapper.

The chief and the adjutant prefect gave their versions. The clerk dragged out a couple of law books; the three executive officers put their heads together and talked in low tones, turning pages rapidly and pointing to passages.

Finally the adjutant prefect gave in. He yawned elaborately. "Oh, well, it would be a dreadful bore to have to drag him up to Ravenna, anyway. Especially as the mosquito season will be starting there shortly. Glad to have seen

you, my lord count." He bowed to Honorius, nodded casually to the chief, and departed.

Honorius said: "Now that we have him, what's to be done with him? Let's see that complaint."

The clerk dug out a paper and gave it to the count who read aloud.

"*Hm-m-m* '—and furthermore, the said Martinus Paduei did most wickedly and feloniously consort with the Evil One, who taught him the diabolical arts of magic wherewith he has been jeopardizing the welfare of the citizens of the city of Rome—signed, Hannibal Scipio of Palermo.' " The count paused to study Padway, then he said, "Wasn't this Hannibal Scipio a former associate of yours or something?"

"Yes, my lord count," said Padway, who stated the circumstances of his parting with his foreman. "If it's my printing press that he's referring to, I can easily show that it's a simple mechanical device, no more magical than one of your water clocks."

"Hm-m-m," said Honorius, "that may or may not be true." He looked through narrowed eyes at Padway. "These new enterprises of yours have prospered pretty well, haven't they?" His faint smile reminded Padway of a fox dreaming of unguarded henroosts.

"Yes and no, my lord. I have made a little money, but I've put most of it back in the business, so I have no more cash than I need for day-to-day expenses."

"Too bad," said Honorius. "It looks as though we'd have to let the case go through."

Padway was getting more and more nervous under that penetrating scrutiny, but he put up a bold front. "My lord, I don't think you have a sound case. It would be most unfortunate for your dignity to let the case come to trial."

"So? I'm afraid my good man, that you don't know our expert interrogators. You'll have admitted all sorts of things by the time they finish . . . ah . . . questioning you."

"Um-m-m. My lord, I said I didn't have much *cash.* But I have an idea that might interest you."

"That's better. Lutetius, may I use your private office?"

Without waiting for an answer, Honorius marched to the office, jerking his head to Padway to follow. The chief looked after them sourly, obviously resenting the loss of his share of the swag.

In the chief's office, Honorius turned to Padway.

"You weren't proposing to bribe your governor by any chance, were you?" he asked coldly.

"Well . . . uh . . . not exactly—"

The count shot his head forward. "How much?" he snapped. "And what's it in—jewels?"

Padway sighed with relief. "Please, my lord, not so fast. It'll take a bit of explaining."

"Your explanation had better be good, foreigner."

"It's this way, my lord: I'm just a poor stranger in Rome, and naturally I have to depend on my wits for a living. The only really valuable thing I have is those wits. But, with reasonably kind treatment, they can be made to pay a handsome return."

"Get to the point, young man."

"You have a law against limited-liability corporations in other than public enterprises, have you not?"

Honorius rubbed his chin. "We did have once. I don't know what its status is, now that the Senate's authority is limited to the city. I don't think the Goths have made any regulations on that subject. Why?"

"Well if you can get the senate to pass an amendment to the old law—I don't think it would be necessary, but it would look better—I could show you how you and a few other deserving senators could benefit handsomely from the organization and operation of such a company."

Honorius stiffened. "Young man, that's a miserable sort of offer. You ought to know that the dignity of a patrician forbids him to engage in trade."

"You wouldn't engage in trade, my lord. You'd be the owner of the stockholders."

"We'd be the what?"

Padway explained the operation of a stock corporation.

Honorius rubbed his chin again. "Yes, I see where something might be made of that plan. What sort of company did you have in mind?"

"A company for the transmission of information over long distances much more rapidly than a messenger can travel. In my country they'd call it a semaphore telegraph. The company gets its revenue from tolls on private messages. Of course, it wouldn't hurt if you could get a subsidy from the royal treasury, on the ground that such an institution was invaluable for national defense."

Honorius thought awhile. Then he said: "I won't commit myself now; I shall have to think about the matter and sound out my friends. In the meantime, you will, of course, remain in Lutetius' custody here."

Padway grinned. "My lord count, your daughter is getting married next week, isn't she?"

"What of it?"

"You will want a nice write-up of the wedding in my paper. A list of distinguished guests, a woodcut picture of the bride, and so forth."

"Hm-m-m. I shouldn't mind that; no."

"Well, then, you better not hold me, or I shan't be able to get the paper out. It would be a pity if such a gala event missed the news because the publisher was in jail at the time."

Honorius rubbed his chin and smiled thinly. "For a barbarian, you're not as stupid as one would expect. I shall have you released."

"Many thanks, my lord. I might add that I shall be able to write more glowing paragraphs after that complaint has been dismissed. We creative workers, you know—"

When Padway was out of earshot of the jail, he indulged in a long "*Whew!*" He was sweating, and not with the heat, either. It was fortunate that none of the officials noticed how near he had been to collapse from sheer terror. The prospect of a stand-up fight wouldn't have bothered him more than most young men. But torture . . .

As soon as he had put his workshop in order, he went into a huddle with Thomasus. He was properly prepared when at last, a procession of five sedan chairs, bearing Honorius and four other senators, crawled up the avenue to his place. The senators seemed not only willing but eager to lay their money on the line, especially after they saw the beautiful stock certificates that Padway had printed. But they didn't seem to have quite Padway's idea of how to run a corporation.

One of them poked him in the ribs and grinned.

"My dear Martinus, you're not *really* going to put up those silly signal towers and things?"

"Well," said Padway cautiously, "that was the idea."

The senator winked. "Oh, I understand that you'll have to put up a couple to fool the middle class, so we can sell our stock at a profit. But *we* know it's all a fake, don't we? You couldn't make anything with your signaling scheme in a thousand years."

Padway didn't bother to argue with him. He also didn't bother to explain the true object of having Thomasus the Syrian, Ebenezer the Jew, and Vardan the Armenian each take eighteen per cent of the stock. The senators might have been interested in knowing that these three bankers had agreed ahead of time to hold their stock and vote as Padway instructed, thereby giving him, with fifty-four per cent of the stock, complete control of the corporation.

Padway had every intention of making his telegraph company a success, starting with a line of towers from Naples to Rome to Ravenna, and tying its operation in with that of his paper. He soon ran into an elementary difficulty: If he wanted to keep his expenses down to somewhere within sight of income, he needed telescopes, to make possible a wide spacing of the towers. Telescopes meant lenses. Where in the world was there a lens or a man who could make one? True, there was a *story* about Nero's emerald lorgnette . . .

Padway went to see Sextus Dentatus, the froglike goldsmith who had changed his lire to sesterces. Dentatus croaked directions to the establishment of one Florianus the Glazier.

Florianus was a light-haired man with a drooping mustache and a nasal accent. He came to the front of his dark little shop smelling strongly of wine. Yes, he had owned his own glass factory once, at Cologne. But business was bad for the Rhineland glass industry; the uncertainties of life under the Franks, you know, my dear sir. He had gone broke. Now he made a precarious living mending windows and such.

Padway explained what he wanted, paid a little on account, and left him. When he went back on the promised day, Florianus flapped his hands as if he were trying to take off. "A thousand pardons, my dear sir! It has been hard to buy up the necessary cullet. But a few days more, I pray you. And if I could have a little more money on account—times are hard—I am poor—"

On Padway's third visit he found Florianus drunk. When Padway shook him, all the man could do was mumble Gallo-romance at him, which Padway did not understand. Padway went to the back of the shop. There was no sign of tools or materials for making lenses.

Padway left in disgust. The nearest real glass industry was at Puteoli, near Naples. It would take forever to get anything done by correspondence.

Padway called in George Menandrus and hired him as editor of the paper. For several days he talked himself hoarse and Menandrus deaf on How to Be an Editor. Then, with a sinking heart, he left for Naples. He experienced the famous canal-boat ride celebrated by Horace, and found it quite as bad as alleged.

Vesuvius was not smoking. But Puteoli, on the little strip of level ground between the extinct crater of Solfatara and the sea, was. Padway and Fritharik sought out the place recommended by Dentatus. This was one of the largest and smokiest of the glass factories.

Padway asked the doorman for Andronicus, the proprietor. Andronicus was a short, brawny man covered with soot. When Padway told who he was, Andronicus cried: "Ah! Fine! Come, gentlemen, I have just the thing."

They followed him into his private inferno. The vestibule, which was also the office, was lined with shelves. The shelves were covered with glassware. Andronicus picked up a vase. "Ah! Look! Such clearness! You couldn't get whiter glass from Alexandria! Only two solidi!"

Padway said: "I didn't come for a vase, my dear sir. I want—"

"No vase? No vase? Ah! Here is the thing." He picked up another vase. "Look! The shape! Such purity of line! It reminds you—"

"I said I didn't want to buy a vase. I want—"

"It reminds you of a beautiful woman! Of love!" Andronicus kissed his fingertips.

"I want some small pieces of glass, made specially—"

"Beads? Of course, gentlemen. Look." The glass manufacturer scooped up a handful of beads. "Look at the color! Emerald, turquoise, everything!" He

picked up another bunch. "See here, the faces of the twelve apostles, one on each bead—"

"Not beads—"

"A beaker, then! Here is one. Look, it has the Holy Family in high relief—"

"Jesus!" yelled Padway. "Will you listen?"

When Andronicus let Padway explain what he wanted, the Neapolitan said: "Of course! Fine! I've seen ornaments shaped like that. I'll rough them out tonight, and have them ready day after tomorrow—"

"That won't quite do," said Padway. "These have to have an exactly spherical surface. You grind a concave against a convex with what's your word for *emery?* The stuff you use in rough grinding? Some *naxium* to true them off . . ."

Padway and Fritharik went on to Naples and put up at the house of Thomasus' cousin, Antiochus the Shipper. Their welcome was less than cordial. It transpired that Antiochus was fanatically Orthodox. He loathed his cousin's Nestorianism. His pointed remarks about heretics made his guests so uncomfortable that they moved out on the third day. They took lodgings at an inn whose lack of sanitation distressed Padway's cleanly soul.

Each morning they rode out to Puteoli to see how the lenses were coming. Andronicus invariably tried to sell them a ton of glass junk.

When they left for Rome, Padway had a dozen lenses, half plano-convex and half plano-concave. He was skeptical about the possibility of making a telescope by holding a pair of lenses in line with his eye and judging the distances. It worked, though.

The most practical combination proved to be a concave lens for the eyepiece with a convex one about thirty inches in front of it. The glass had bubbles, and the image was somewhat distorted. But Padway's telescope, crude as it was, would make a two-to-one difference in the number of signal towers required.

About then, the paper ran its first advertisement.

Thomasus had had to turn the screw on one of his debtors to make him buy space. The ad read:

DO YOU WANT A GLAMOROUS FUNERAL?

Go to meet your Maker in style! With one of
Our funerals to look forward to,
you will hardly mind dying!
Don't imperil your chances of salvation
with a bungled burial!
Our experts have handled some of the
noblest corpses in Rome.
Arrangements made with the priesthood of any

sect. Special rates for heretics. Appropriately
doleful music furnished at slight extra cost.
John The Egyptian, Genteel Undertaker Near The Viminal Gate

CHAPTER VI

Junianus, construction manager of the Roman Telegraph Co., panted into Padway's office. He said: "Work"—stopped to get his breath, and started again—"work on the third tower on the Naples line was stopped this morning by a squad of soldiers from the Rome garrison. I asked them what the devil was up, and they said they didn't know; they just had orders to stop construction. What, most excellent boss, are you going to do about it?"

So the Goths objected? That meant seeing their higher-ups. Padway winced at the idea of getting involved any further in politics. He sighed. "I'll see Liuderis, I suppose."

The commander of the Rome garrison was a big, portly Goth with the bushiest white whiskers Padway had ever seen. His Latin was fair. But now and then he cocked a blue eye at the ceiling and moved his lips silently, as if praying; actually he was running through a declension or a conjugation for the right ending.

He said: "My good Martinus, there is a war on. You start erecting these . . . ah . . . mysterious towers without asking our permission. Some of your backers are patricians . . . ah . . . notorious for their pro-Greek sentiments. What are we to think? You should consider yourself lucky to have escaped arrest."

Padway protested: "I was hoping the army would find them useful for transmitting military information."

Liuderis shrugged. "I am merely a simple soldier doing my duty. I do not understand these . . . ah . . . devices. Perhaps they will work as you say. But I could not take the . . . ah . . . responsibility for permitting them."

"Then you won't withdraw your order?"

"No. If you want permission, you will have to see the king."

"But, my dear sir, I can't spare the time to go running up to Ravenna—"

Another shrug. "All one to me, my good Martinus. I know my duty."

Padway tried guile. "You certainly do, it seems. If I were the king, I couldn't ask for a more faithful soldier."

"You flatterer!" But Liuderis grinned, pleased. "I regret that I cannot grant your little request."

"What's the latest war news?"

Liuderis frowned. "Not very—But then I should be careful what I say. You are a more dangerous person than you look, I am sure."

"You can trust me. I'm pro-Gothic."

"Yes?" Liuderis was silent while the wheels turned. Then: "What is your religion?"

Padway was expecting that. "Congregationalist. That's the nearest thing to Arianism we have in my country."

"Ah; then perhaps you are as you say. The news is not good, what little there is. There is nobody in Bruttium but a small force under the king's son-in-law, Evermuth. And our good king—" He shrugged again, this time hopelessly.

"Now look here, most excellent Liuderis, won't you withdraw that order? I'll write Thiudahad at once asking his permission."

"No, my good Martinus, I cannot. You get the permission first. And you had better go in person, if you want action."

Thus it came about that Padway found himself, quite against his wishes, trotting an elderly saddle horse across the Apennines toward the Adriatic. Fritharik had been delighted at first to get any kind of a horse between his knees. Before they had gone very far his tone changed.

"Boss," he grumbled, "I'm not an educated man. But I know horseflesh. I always claimed that a good horse was a good investment." He added darkly: "If we are attacked by brigands, we'll have no chance with those poor old wrecks. Not that I fear death, or brigands either. But it would be sad for a Vandal knight to end in a nameless grave in one of these lonely valleys. When I was a noble in Africa—"

"We aren't running a racing stable," snapped Padway. At Fritharik's hurt look he was sorry he had spoken sharply. "Never mind, old man, we'll be able to afford good horses some day. Only right now I feel as if I had a pantsful of ants."

Brazilian army ants, he added to himself. He had done almost no riding since his arrival in old Rome, and not a great deal in his former life. By the time they reached Spoleto he felt as if he could neither sit nor stand, but would have to spend the rest of his life in a sort of semi-squat, like a rheumatic chimpanzee.

They approached Ravenna at dusk on the fourth day. The City in the Mist sat dimly astride the thirty mile causeway that divided the Adriatic from the

vast marshy lagoons to the west. A faint sunbeam lighted the gilded church domes. The church bells bonged, and the frogs in the lagoons fell silent; then resumed their croaking. Padway thought that anyone who visited this strange city would always be haunted by the bong of the bells, the croak of the frogs, and the thin, merciless song of the mosquitoes.

Padway decided that the chief usher, like Poo-Bah, had been born sneering. "My good man," said this being, "I couldn't possibly give you an audience with our lord king for three weeks at least."

Three weeks! In that time half of Padway's assorted machines would have broken down, and his men would be running in useless circles trying to fix them. Menandrus, who was inclined to be reckless with money, especially other people's, would have run the paper into bankruptcy. This impasse required thought. Padway straightened his aching legs and started to leave.

The Italian immediately lost some of his top loftiness. "But," he cried in honest amazement, "didn't you bring any *money?*"

Of course, Padway thought, he should have known that the man hadn't meant what he'd said. "What's your schedule of rates?"

The usher, quite seriously, began counting on his fingers. "Well, for twenty solidi I could give you your audience tomorrow. For the day after tomorrow, ten solidi is my usual rate; but that's Sunday, so I'm offering interviews on Monday at seven and a half. For one week in advance, two solidi. For two weeks—"

Padway interrupted to offer a five-solidi bribe for a Monday interview, and finally got it at that price plus a small bottle of brandy. The usher said: "You'll be expected to have a present for the king, too, you know."

"I know," said Padway wearily. He showed the usher a small leather case. "I'll present it personally."

Thiudahad Tharasmund's son, King of the Ostragoths and Italians; Commander in Chief of the Armies of Italy, Illyria, and Southern Gaul; Premier Prince of the Amal Clan; Count of Tuscany; Illustrious Patrician; ex officio President of the Circus; et cetera, et cetera, was about Padway's height, thin to gauntness, and had a small gray beard. He peered at his caller with watery gray eyes, and said in a reedy voice: "Come in, come in, my good man. What's *your* business? Oh, yes, Martinus Paduei. You're the publisher chap aren't you? Eh?" He spoke upper-class Latin without a trace of accent.

Padway bowed ceremoniously. "I am, my lord king. Before we discuss the business, I have—"

"Great thing, that book-making machine of yours. I've heard of it. Great thing for scholarship. You must see my man Cassiodorus. I'm sure he'd like you to publish his *Gothic History.* Great work. Deserves a wide circulation."

Padway waited patiently. "I have a small gift for you, my lord. A rather unusual—"

"Eh? Gift? By all means. Let's see it."

Padway took out the case and opened it.

Thiudahad piped: "Eh? What the devil is that?"

Padway explained the function of a magnifying glass. He didn't dwell on Thiudahad's notorious nearsightedness.

Thiudahad picked up a book and tried the glass on it. He squealed with delight. "Fine, my good Martinus. Shall I be able to read all I want without getting headaches?"

"I hope so, my lord. At least it should help. Now, about my business here—"

"Oh, yes, you want to see me about publishing Cassiodorus. I'll fetch him for you:"

"No, my lord. It's about something else." He went on quickly before Thiudahad could interrupt again, telling him of his difficulty with Liuderis.

"Eh? I never bother my local military commanders. They know their business."

"But, my lord—" and Padway gave the king a little sales talk on the importance of the telegraph company.

"Eh? A money-making scheme, you say? If it's as good as all that, why wasn't I let in on it at the start?"

That rather jarred Padway. He said something vague about there not having been time. King Thiudahad wagged his head. "Still, that wasn't considerate of you, Martinus. It wasn't loyal. And if people aren't loyal to their king, where are we? If you deprive your king of an opportunity to make a little honest profit, I don't see why I should interfere with Liuderis on your account."

"Well, ahem, my lord, I did have an idea—"

"Not considerate at all. What were you saying? Come to the point, my good man, come to the point."

Padway resisted an impulse to strangle this exasperating little man. He beckoned Fritharik, who was standing statuesquely in the background. Fritharik produced a telescope, and Padway explained *its* functions . . .

"Yes, Yes? Very interesting, I'm sure. Thank you, Martinus. I will say that you bring your king original presents."

Padway gasped; he hadn't intended giving Thiudahad his best telescope. But it was too late now. He said: "I thought that if my lord king saw fit to . . . ah . . . ease matters with your excellent Liuderis, I could insure your undying fame in the world of scholarship."

"Eh? What's that? What do you know about scholarship? Oh, I forgot; you're a publisher. Something about Cassiodorus."

Padway repressed a sigh. "No, my lord. *Not* Cassiodorus. How would you like the credit for revolutionizing men's idea about the solar system?"

"I don't believe in interfering with my local commanders, Martinus. Liuderis is an excellent man. Eh? What were you saying. Something about the solar system? What's that got to do with Liuderis?"

"Nothing, my lord." Padway repeated what he had said.

"Well, maybe I'd consider it. What is this theory of yours?"

Little by little Padway wormed from Thiudahad a promise of a free hand for the telegraph company, in return for bits of information about the Copernican hypothesis, instructions for the use of the telescope to see the moons of Jupiter, and a promise to publish a treatise on astronomy in Thiudahad's name.

At the end of an hour he grinned and said, "Well, my lord, we seem to be in agreement. There's just one more thing. This telescope would be a valuable instrument of warfare. If you wanted to equip your officers with them—"

"Eh? Warfare? You'll have to see Wittigis about that. He's my head general."

"Where's he?"

"Where? Oh, dear me, I don't know. Somewhere up north, I think. There's been a little invasion by the Allemans or somebody."

"When will he be back?"

"How should I know, my good Martinus? When he's driven out these Allemans or Burgunds or whoever they are."

"But, most excellent lord, if you'll pardon me, the war with the Imperialists is definitely on. I think it's important to get these telescopes into the hands of the army as soon as possible. We'd be prepared to supply them at a reasonable—"

"Now, Martinus," snapped the king peevishly, "don't try to tell me how to run my kingdom. You're as bad as my Royal Council. Always 'Why don't you do this?' 'Why don't you do that?' I trust my commanders; don't bother myself with details. I say you'll have to see Wittigis, and that settles it."

Thiudahad was obviously prepared to be mulish, so Padway said a few polite nothings, bowed, and withdrew.

CHAPTER VII

When Padway got back to Rome, his primary concern was to see how his paper was coming. The first issue that had been put out since his departure was all right. About the second, which had just been printed, Menandrus was mysteriously elated, hinting that he had a splendid surprise for his employer. He had. Padway glanced at a proof sheet, and his heart almost stopped. On the front page was a detailed account of the bribe which the new Pope, Silverius, had paid King Thiudahad to secure his election.

"Hell's bells!" cried Padway. "Haven't you any better sense than to print this, George?"

"Why?" asked Menandrus, crestfallen. "It's true, isn't it?"

"Of course, it's true! But you don't want us all hanged or burned at the stake, do you? The Church is already suspicious of us. Even if you find that a bishop is keeping twenty concubines, you're not to print a word of it."

Menandrus sniffled a little; he wiped away a tear and blew his nose on his tunic. "I'm sorry, excellent boss. I tried to please you; you have no idea how much trouble I went to get the facts about that bribe. There is a bishop, too—not *twenty* concubines, but—"

"But we don't consider that news, for reasons of health. Thank heaven, no copies of this issue have gone out yet."

"Oh, but they have."

"What?" Padway's yell made a couple of workmen from the machine shop look in.

"Why, yes, John the Bookseller took the first hundred copies out just a minute ago."

John the Bookseller got the scare of his life when Padway; still dirty from days of travel, galloped down the street after him, dove off his horse, and grabbed his arm. Somebody set up a cry of "Thieves! Robbers! Help! Mur-

der!" Padway found himself trying to explain to forty truculent citizens that everything was all right.

A Gothic soldier pushed through the crowd and asked what was going on here. A citizen pointed at Padway and shouted: "It's the fellow with the boots. I heard him say he'd cut the other man's throat if he didn't hand over his money!" So the Goth arrested Padway.

Padway kept his clutch on John the Bookseller, who was too frightened to speak. He went along quietly with the Goth until they were out of earshot of the crowd. Then he asked the soldier into a wineshop, treated him and John, and explained. The Goth was noncommittal, despite John's corroboration, until Padway tipped him liberally. Padway got his freedom and his precious papers. Then all he had to worry about was the fact that somebody had stolen his horse while he was in the Goth's custody.

Padway trudged back to his house with the papers under his arm. His household was properly sympathetic about the loss of the horse. Fritharik said: "There, illustrious boss, that piece of crow bait wasn't worth much anyhow."

Padway felt much better when he learned that the first leg of the telegraph ought to be completed in a week or ten days. He poured himself a stiff drink before dinner. After his strenuous day it made his head swim a little. He got Fritharik to join him in one of the latter's barbarian warsongs:

"The black earth shakes
As the heroes ride,
And the ravens blood—
Red sun will hide!
The lances dip
In a glittering wave,
And the coward turns
His gore to save . . ."

When Julia was late with the food, Padway gave her a playful spank. He was a little surprised at himself.

After dinner he was sleepy. He said to hell with the accounts and went upstairs to bed, leaving Fritharik already snoring on his mattress in front of the door. Padway would not have laid any long bets on Fritharik's ability to wake up when a burglar entered.

He had just started to undress when a knock startled him. He could not imagine . . .

"Fritharik?" he called.

"No. It's me."

He frowned and opened the door. The lamplight showed Julia from Apulia. She walked in with a swaying motion.

"What do you want, Julia?" asked Padway.

The stocky, black-haired girl looked at him in some surprise. "Why—uh—my lord wouldn't want me to say right out loud? That wouldn't be nice!"

"Huh?"

She giggled.

"Sorry," said Padway. "Wrong station. Off you go."

She looked baffled. "My—my master doesn't want me?"

"That's right. Not for that anyway."

Her mouth turned down. Two large tears appeared.

"You don't like me? You don't think I'm nice?"

"I think you're a fine cook and a nice girl. Now out with you. Good night."

She stood solidly and began to sniffle. Then she sobbed. Her voice rose to a shrill wail: "Just because I'm from the country—you never looked at me—you never asked for me all this time—then tonight you were nice—I thought—I thought—boo-oo-oo . . ."

"Now, now . . . for heaven's sake stop crying! Here, sit down. I'll get you a drink."

She smacked her lips over the first swallow of diluted brandy. She wiped off the remaining tears. "Nice," she said. Everything was *nice—bonus, bona,* or *bonum,* as the case might be. "You are nice. Love is nice. Every man should have some love. Love—ah!" She made a serpentine movement remarkable in a person of her build.

Padway gulped. "Give me that drink," he said. "I need some too."

After a while. "Now," she said, "we make love?"

"Well—pretty soon. Yes, I guess we do." Padway hiccuped.

Padway frowned at Julia's large bare feet. "Just—*hic—just* a minute, my bounding hamadryad. Let's see those feet." The soles were black. "That won't do. Oh, it absolutely won't do, my lusty Amazon. The feet present an insur—insurmountable psychological obstacle."

"Huh?"

"They interpose a psychic barrier to *the—hic* appropriately devout worship of Ashtaroth. We must lave the pedal extremities—"

"I don't understand."

"Skip it; neither do I. What I mean is that we're going to wash your *feet* first."

"Is that a religion?"

"You might put it that way. Damn!" He knocked the ewer off its base, miraculously catching it on the way down. "Here we go, my Tritoness from the wine dark, fish-swarming sea . . ."

She giggled. "You are the nicest man. You are a real gentleman. No man ever did *that* for me before . . . "

Padway blinked his eyes open. It all came back to him quickly enough. He

tightened his muscles serratus. He felt fine. He prodded his conscience experimentally. It reacted not at all.

He moved carefully, for Julia was taking up two thirds of his none-too-wide bed. He heaved himself on one elbow and looked at her. The movement uncovered her large breasts. Between them was a bit of iron, tied around her neck. This, she had told him, was a nail from the cross of St. Andrew. And she would not put it off.

He smiled. To the list of mechanical inventions he meant to introduce he added a couple of items. But for the present, should he . . .

A small gray thing with six legs, not much larger than a pinhead, emerged from the hair under her armpit. Pale against her olive-brown skin, it crept with glacial slowness . . .

Padway shot out of bed. Face writhing with revulsion, he pulled his clothes on without taking time to wash. The room smelled. Rome must have blunted his sense of smell, or he'd have noticed it before.

Julia awoke as he was finishing. He threw a muttered good morning at her and tramped out.

He spent two hours in the public baths that day. The next night Julia's knock brought a harsh order to get away from his room and stay away. She began to wail. Padway snatched the door open. "One more squawk and you're fired!" he snapped, and slammed the door.

She was obedient but sulky. During the next few days he caught venomous glances from her; she was no actress.

The following Sunday he returned from the Ulpian Library to find a small crowd of men in front of his house. They were just standing and looking. Padway looked at the house and could see nothing out of order.

He asked a man: "What's funny about my house, stranger?"

The man looked at him silently. They all looked at him silently. They moved off in twos and threes. They began to walk fast, sometimes glancing back.

Monday morning two of the workmen failed to report. Nerva came to Padway and, after much clearing of the throat, said: "I thought you'd like to know, lordly Martinus. I went to mass at the Church of the Angel Gabriel yesterday as usual."

"Yes?" That church was on Long Street four blocks from Padway's house.

"Father Narcissus preached a homily against sorcery. He talked about people who hired demons from Satanas and work strange devices. It was a very strong sermon. He sounded as if he might be thinking of you."

Padway worried. It might be coincidence, but he was pretty sure that Julia had gone to confessional and spilled the beans about fornicating with a magician. One sermon had sent the crowd to stare at the wizard's lair. A few more like that . . .

Padway feared a mob of religious enthusiasts more than anything on earth, no doubt because their mental processes were so utterly alien to his own.

He called Menandrus in and asked for information on Father Narcissus. The information was discouraging from Padway's point of view. Father Narcissus was one of the most respected priests in Rome. He was upright, charitable, humane, and fearless. He was in deadly earnest twenty-four hours a day. And there was no breath of scandal about him, which fact by itself made him a distinguished cleric.

"George," said Padway, "didn't you once mention a bishop with concubines?"

Menandrus grinned slyly. "It's the Bishop of Bologna, sir. He's one of the Pope's cronies; spends more time at the Vatican than at his see. He has two women—at least, two that we know of. I have their names and everything. Everybody knows that a lot of bishops have one concubine, but two! I thought it would make a good story for the paper."

"It may yet. Write me up a story, George, about the Bishop of Bologna and his loves. Make it sensational, but accurate. Set it up and pull three or four galley proofs; then put the type away in a safe place."

It took Padway a week to gain an audience with the Bishop of Bologna, who was providentially in Rome. The bishop was a gorgeously dressed person with a beautiful, bloodless face. Padway suspected a highly convoluted brain behind that sweet, ascetic smile.

Padway kissed the bishop's hand, and they murmured pleasant nothings. Padway talked of the Church's wonderful work, and how he tried in his humble way to further it at every opportunity.

"For instance," he said, "—do you know of my weekly paper, reverend sir?"

"Yes, I read it with pleasure."

"Well, you know I have to keep a close watch on my boys, who are prone to err in their enthusiasm for news. I have tried to make the paper a clean sheet fit to enter any home, without scandal or libel. Though that sometimes meant I had to write most of an issue myself." He sighed. "Ah, sinful men! Would you believe it, reverend sir, that I have had to suppress stories of foul libel against members of the Holy Church? The most shocking of all came in recently."

He took out one of the galley proofs. "I hardly dare show it to you, sir, lest your justified wrath at this filthy product of a disordered imagination should damn me to eternal flames."

The bishop squared his thin shoulders. "Let me see it, my son. A priest sees many dreadful things in his career. It takes a strong spirit to serve the Lord in these times."

Padway handed over the sheet. The bishop read it. A sad expression came

over his angelic face. "Ah, poor weak mortals! They know not that they hurt themselves far more than the object of their calumny. It shows that we must have God's help at every turn lest we fall into sin. If you will tell me who wrote this, I will pray for him."

"A man named Marcus," said Padway. "I discharged him immediately, of course. I want nobody who is not prepared to cooperate with the Church to the full."

The bishop cleared his throat delicately. "I appreciate your righteous efforts," he said. "If there is some favor within my power—"

Padway told him about the good Father Narcissus, who was showing such a lamentable misunderstanding of Padway's enterprises . . .

Padway went to mass next Sunday. He sat well down in front, determined to face the thing out if Father Narcissus proved obdurate. He sang with the rest:

Imminet, imminet,
Recta remuneret.
Aethera donet,
Ille supremus!

He reflected that there was this good in Christianity: By its concepts of the Millennium and Judgment Day it accustomed people to looking forward in a way that the older religions did not, and so prepared their minds for the conceptions of organic evolution and scientific progress.

Father Narcisus began his sermon where he had left off a week before. Sorcery was the most damnable of crimes; they should not suffer a witch to live, etc.

Padway stiffened.

But, continued the good priest with a sour glance at Padway, we should not in our holy enthusiasm confuse the practitioner of black arts and the familiar of devils with the honest artisan who by his ingenious devices ameliorates our journey through this vale of tears. After all, Adam invented the plow and Noah the ocean-going ship. And this new art of machine writing would make it possible to spread the word of God among the heathen more effectively . . .

When Padway got home, he called in Julia and told her he would not need her any more. Julia from Apulia began to weep, softly at first, then more and more violently. "What kind of man are you? I give you love. I give you everything. But no, you think I am just a little country girl you can do anythingyouwantandthenyougettired . . ." The patois came with such machine-gun rapidity that Padway could no longer follow. When she began to shriek and tear her dress, Padway ungallantly threatened to have Fritharik throw her out bodily forthwith. She quieted.

The day after she left, Padway gave his house a personal going over to see whether anything had been stolen or broken. Under his bed he found a curious object: a bundle of chicken feathers tied with horsehair around what appeared to be a long-defunct mouse; the whole thing stiff with dried blood.

Fritharik did not know what it was. But George Menandrus did; he turned a little pale and muttered: "A curse!"

He reluctantly informed Padway that this was a bad-luck charm peddled by one of the local wizards; the discharged housekeeper had undoubtedly left it there to bring Padway to an early and gruesome death. Menandrus himself wasn't too sure he wanted to keep on with his job. "Not that I really believe in curses, excellent sir, but with my family to support I can't take chances . . ."

A raise in pay disposed of Menandrus' qualms. Menandrus was disappointed that Padway didn't use the occasion to have Julia arrested and hanged for witchcraft. "Just think," he said, "it would put us on the right side of the Church, and it would make a wonderful story for the paper."

Padway hired another housekeeper. This one was gray-haired, rather frail-looking, and depressingly virginal. That was why Padway took her.

He learned that Julia had gone to work for Ebenezer the Jew. He hoped that Julia would not try any of her specialties on Ebenezer. The old banker did not look as if he could stand much of them.

Padway told Thomasus: "We ought to get the first message from Naples over the telegraph any time now."

Thomasus rubbed his hands together: "You are a wonder, Martinus. Only I'm worried that you'll overreach yourself. The messengers of the Italian civil service are complaining that this invention will destroy their livelihood. Unfair competition, they say."

Padway shrugged. "We'll see. Maybe there'll be some war news."

Thomasus frowned. "That's another thing that's worrying me. Thiudahad hasn't done a thing about the defense of Italy. I'd hate to see the war carried as far north as Rome."

"I'll make you a bet," said Padway. "The king's son-in-law, Evermuth the Vandal, will desert to the Imperialists. One solidus."

"Done!" Almost at that moment Junianus, who had been put in charge of operations, came in with a paper. It was the first message, and it carried the news that Belisarius had landed at Reggio; that Evermuth had gone over to him; that the Imperialists were marching on Naples.

Padway grinned at the banker, whose jaw was sagging. "Sorry, old man, but I need that solidus. I'm saving up for a new horse."

"Do You hear that, God? Martinus, the next time I lay a bet with a magician, you can have me declared incompetent and a guardian appointed."

Two days later a messenger came in and told Padway that the king was in Rome, staying at the Palace of Tiberius, and that Padway's presence was desired.

Padway thought that perhaps Thiudahad had reconsidered the telescope proposal. But no.

"My good Martinus," said Thiudahad, "I must ask you to discontinue the operation of your telegraph. At once."

"What? Why, my lord king?"

"You know what happened? Eh? That thing of yours spread the news of my son-in-law's good fort—his treachery all over Rome a few hours after it happened. Bad for morale. Encourages the pro-Greek element, and brings criticism on me. *Me*. So you'll please not operate it any more, at least during the war."

"But, my lord, I thought that your army would find it useful for—"

"Not another word about it, Martinus. I forbid it. Now, let me see. Dear me, there was something else I wanted to see you about. Oh, yes, my man Cassiodorus would like to meet you. You'll stay for lunch, won't you? Great scholar, Cassiodorus."

So Padway presently found himself bowing to the pretorian prefect, an elderly, rather saintly Italian. They were immediately deep in a discussion of historiography, literature, and the hazards of the publishing business. Padway to his annoyance found that he was enjoying himself. He knew that he was abetting these spineless old dodderers in their criminal disregard of their country's defense. But—upsetting thought—he had enough of the unworldly intellectual in his own nature so that he couldn't help sympathizing with them. And he hadn't gone on an intellectual debauch of this kind since he'd arrived in old Rome.

"Illustrious Cassiodorus," he said, "perhaps you've noticed that in my paper I've been trying to teach the typesetter to distinguish between U and V, and also between I and J. That's a reform that's long been needed, don't you think?"

"Yes, yes, my excellent Martinus. The Emperor Claudius tried something of the sort. But which letter do you use for which sound in each case?"

Padway explained. He also told Cassiodorus of his plans for printing the paper, or at least part of it, in Vulgar Latin. At that Cassiodorus held up his hands in mild horror.

"Excellent Martinus! These wretched dialects that pass for Latin nowadays? What would Ovid say if he heard them? What would Virgil say? What would any of the ancient masters say?"

"As they were a bit before our time," grinned Padway, "I'm afraid we shall never know. But I will assert that even in their day the final s's and m's had been dropped from ordinary pronunciation. And in any event, the pronunciation and grammar have changed too far from the classical models ever to be changed back again. So if we want our new instrument for the dissemination of literature to be useful, we shall have to adopt a spelling that more or less

agrees with the spoken language. Otherwise people won't bother to learn it. To begin with, we shall have to add a half dozen new letters to the alphabet. For instance—"

When Padway left, hours later, he had at least made an effort to bring the conversation around to measures for prosecuting the war. It had been useless, but his conscience was salved.

Padway was surprised, though he shouldn't have been, at the effect of the news of his acquaintance with the king and the prefect. Well-born Romans called on him, and he was even asked to a couple of very dull dinners that began at four P.M. and lasted most of the night.

As he listened to the windy conversation and the windier speeches, he thought that a twentieth-century after-dinner speaker could have taken lessons in high flown, meaningless rhetoric from these people. From the slightly nervous way that his hosts introduced him around, he gathered that they still regarded him as something of a monster, but a well-behaved monster whom it might be useful to know.

Even Cornelius Anicius looked him up and issued the long-coveted invitation to his house. He did not apologize for the slight snub in the library, but his deferential manner suggested that he remembered it.

Padway swallowed his pride and accepted. He thought it foolish to judge Anicius by his own standards. And he wanted another look at the pretty brunette.

When the time came, he got up from his desk, washed his hands, and told Fritharik to come along.

Fritharik said, scandalized: "You are going to *walk* to this Roman gentleman's house?"

"Sure. It's only a couple of miles. Do us good."

"Oh, most respectable boss, you can't! It isn't done! I know; I worked for such a patrician once. You should have a sedan chair, or at least a horse."

"Nonsense. Anyway, we've got only one saddle horse. You don't want to walk while I ride, do you?"

"N-no-not that I mind walking; but it would look funny for a gentleman's free retainer like me to go afoot like a slave on a formal occasion."

Damn this etiquette, thought Padway.

Fritharik said hopefully: "Of course there's the workhorse. He's a good-looking animal; one might almost mistake him for a heavy cavalry horse."

"But I don't want the boys in the shop to lose a couple of hours' production just because of some damned piece of face-saving—"

Padway rode the workhorse. Fritharik rode the remaining bony saddle horse.

Padway was shown into a big room whose ornamentation reminded him of the late Victorian gewgaw culture. Through a closed door he could hear

Anicius' voice coming through in rolling pentameters:

"Rome, the warrior-goddess, her seat had taken,
With breast uncovered, a mural crown on her head.
Behind, from under her spacious helmet escaping,
The hair of her plumed head flowed over her back.
Modest her mien, but sternness her beauty makes awesome.
Of purple hue is her robe, with fanglike clasp;
Under her bosom a jewel her mantle gathers.
A vast and glowing shield her side supports,
Whereon, in stout metal cast, the cave of Rhea—"

The servant had sneaked through the door and whispered. Anicius broke off his declamation and popped out with a book under his arm. He cried: "My dear Martinus! I crave your pardon; I was rehearsing a speech I am to give tomorrow." He tapped the book under his arm and smiled guiltily. "It will not be a strictly original speech; but you won't betray me, will you?"

"Of course not. I heard some of it through the door."

"You did? What did you think of it?"

"I thought your delivery was excellent." Padway resisted a temptation to add: "But what does it *mean?*" Such a question about a piece of post-Roman rhetoric would, he realized, be both futile and tactless.

"You did?" cried Anicius. "Splendid! I am greatly gratified! I shall be as nervous tomorrow as Cadmus when the dragon's teeth began to sprout, but the approval of one competent critic in advance will fortify me. And now I'll leave you to Dorothea's mercy while I finish this. You will not take offense, I hope? Splendid! Oh, daughter!"

Dorothea appeared and exchanged courtesies. She took Padway out in the garden while Anicius went back to his plagiarism of Sidonius.

Dorothea said: "You should hear father some time. He takes you back to the time when Rome really was the mistress of the world. If restoring the power of Rome could be done by fine talk, father and his friends would have restored it long ago."

It was hot in the garden, with the heat of an Italian June. Bees buzzed.

Padway said: "What kind of flower do you call that?"

She told him. He was hot. And he was tired of strain and responsibility and ruthless effort. He wanted to be young and foolish for a change.

He asked her more questions about flowers—trivial questions about unimportant matters.

She answered prettily, bending over the flowers to remove a bug now and then. She was hot too. There were little beads of sweat on her upper lip. Her thin dress stuck to her in places. Padway admired the places. She was standing

close to him, talking with grave good humor about flowers and about the bugs and blights that beset them. To kiss her, all he had to do was reach and lean forward a bit. He could hear his blood in his ears. The way she smiled up at him might almost be considered an invitation.

But Padway made no move. While he hesitated his mind clicked off reasons: (a) He didn't know how she'd take it, and shouldn't presume on the strength of a mere friendly smile; (b) if she resented it, as she very likely would, there might be repercussions of incalculable scope; (c) if he made love to her, what would she think he was after? He didn't want a mistress—not that Dorothea Anicius would be willing to become such—and he was not, as far as he knew, in need of a wife: (d) he was in a sense already married . . .

So, he thought, you wanted to be young and foolish a few minutes ago, eh, Martin, my boy? You can't; it's too late; you'll always stop to figure things out rationally, as you've been doing just now. Might as well resign yourself to being a calculating adult, especially as you can't do anything about it.

But it made him a little sad that he would never be one of those impetuous fellows—usually described as tall and handsome—who take one look at a girl, know her to be their destined mate, and sweep her into their arms. He let Dorothea do most of the talking as they wandered back into the house to dinner with Cornelius Anicius and Anicius' oratory. Padway, watching Dorothea as she preceded him, felt slightly disgusted with himself for having let Julia invade his bed.

They sat down—or rather stretched themselves out on the couches, as Anicius insisted on eating in the good old Roman style, to Padway's acute discomfort.

Anicius had a look in his eye that Padway found vaguely familiar.

Padway learned that the look was that of a man who is writing or is about to write a book. Anicius explained: "Ah, the degenerate times we live in, excellent Martinus! The lyre of Orpheus sounds but faintly; Calliope veils her face; blithe Thalia is mute; the hymns of our Holy Church have drowned Euterpe's sweet strains. Yet a few of us strive to hold high the torch of poetry while swimming the Hellespont of barbarism and hoeing the garden of culture."

"Quite a feat," said Padway, squirming in a vain effort to find a comfortable position.

"Yes, we persist despite Herculean discouragements. For instance, you will not consider me forward in submitting to your publisher's eagle-bright scrutiny a little book of verses." He produced a sheaf of papyrus. "Some of them are not really bad, though I their unworthy author say so."

"I should be very much interested," said Padway, smiling with effort. "As for publication, however, I should warn you that I'm contracted for three books by your excellent colleagues already. And between the paper and my schoolbook, it will be some weeks before I can print them."

"Oh," said Anicius with a drooping inflection.

"The illustrious Trajanus Herodius, the distinguished John Leontius, and the respectable Felix Avitus. All epic poems. Because of market conditions these gentlemen have undertaken the financial responsibility of publication."

"Meaning—ah?"

"Meaning that they pay cash in advance, and get the whole price of their books when sold, subject to bookseller's discounts. Of course, distinguished sir, if the book is really good, the author doesn't have to worry about getting back his cost of publication."

"Yes, yes, excellent Martinus, I see. What chances do you think my little creation would have?"

"I'd have to see it first."

"So you would. I'll read some of it now, to give you the idea." Anicius sat up. He held the papyrus in one hand and made noble gestures with the other:

"Mars with his thunderous trumpet his lord acclaims,
The youthful Jupiter, new to his throne ascended,
Above the stars by all-wise Nature placed.
The lesser deities their sire worship,
To ancient sovereignty with pomp succeeding—"

"Father," interrupted Dorothea, "your food's getting cold."

"What? Oh, so it is, child."

"And," continued Dorothea, "I think you ought to write some good Christian sentiment some time, instead of all that pagan superstition."

Anicius sighed. "If you ever have a daughter, Martinus, marry her off early, before she develops the critical faculty."

In August Naples fell to General Belisarius. Thiudahad had done nothing to help the town except seize the families of the small Gothic garrison to insure their fidelity. The only vigorous defense of the city was made by the Neapolitan Jews. These, having heard of Justinian's religious complexes, knew what treatment to expect under Imperial rule.

Padway heard the news with a sick feeling. There was so much that he could do for them if they'd only let him alone. And it would take such a little accident to snuff him out—one of the normal accidents of warfare, like that which happened to Archimedes. In this age civilians who got in the way of belligerent armies would be given the good old rough and ruthless treatment to which the military of his own twentieth century, after a brief hundred and fifty years of relatively humane forbearance, had seemed to be returning.

Fritharik announced that a party of Goths wanted to look Padway's place over. He added in his sepulchral voice: "Thiudegiskel's with them. You know,

the king's son. Watch out for him, excellent boss. He makes trouble."

There were six of them, all young, and they tramped into the house wearing swords, which was not good manners by the standards of the times. Thiudegiskel was a handsome, blond young man who had inherited his father's high-pitched voice.

He stared at Padway, like something in a zoo, and said: "I've wanted to see your place ever since I heard you and the old man were mumbling over manuscripts together. I'm a curious chap, you know, active-minded. What the devil are all these silly machines for?"

Padway did some explaining, while the prince's companions made remarks about his personal appearance in Gothic, under the mistaken impression that he couldn't understand them.

"Ah, yes," said Thiudegiskel, interrupting one of the explanations. "I think that's all I'm interested in here. Now, let's see that bookmaking machine."

Padway showed him the presses.

"Oh, yes, I understand. Really a simple thing, isn't it? I could have invented it myself. All very well for those who like it. Though I can read and write and all that. Better than most people, in fact. But I never cared for it. Dull business, not suited to a healthy man like me."

"No doubt, no doubt, my lord," said Padway. He hoped that the red rage he was feeling didn't show in his face.

"Say, Willimer," said Thiudegiskel, "you remember that tradesman we had fun with last winter? He looked something like this Martinus person. Same big nose."

Willimer roared with laughter. "Do I remember it! *Guths in himinam!* I'll never forget the way he looked when we told him we were going to baptize him in the Tiber, with rocks tied to him so the angels couldn't carry him off! But the funniest thing was when some soldiers from the garrison arrested us for assault!"

Thiudegiskel said to Padway, between guffaws: "You ought to have been there, Martinus. You should have seen old Liuderis' face when he found out who we were! We made him grovel, I can tell you. I've always regretted that I missed the flogging of those soldiers who pinched us. That's one thing about me; I can appreciate the humor of things like that."

"Would you like to see anything more, my lord?" asked Padway, his face wooden.

"Oh, I don't know—Say, what are all those packing cases for?"

"Some stuff just arrived for our machines, my lord, and we haven't gotten around to burning the cases," Padway lied.

Thiudegiskel grinned good-naturedly. "Trying to fool me, huh? I know what you're up to. You're going to sneak your stuff out of Rome before Belisarius gets here, aren't you? That's one thing about me; I can see through little tricks

like that. Well, can't say I blame you. Though it sounds as though you had inside information on how the war will go." He examined a new brass telescope on a workbench. "This is an interesting little device. I'll take it along, if you don't mind."

That was too much even for Padway's monumental prudence. "No, my lord, I'm sorry, but I need that in my business."

Thiudegiskel's eyes were round with astonishment. "Huh? You mean I can't have it?"

"That, my lord, is it."

"Well . . . uh . . . uh . . . if you're going to take that attitude, I'll pay for it."

"It isn't for sale."

Thiudegiskel's neck turned slowly pink with embarrassment and anger. His five friends moved up behind him, their left hands resting on their sword hilts.

The one called Willimer said in a low tone: "I *think,* gentlemen, that our king's son has been insulted."

Thiudegiskel had laid the telescope on the bench. He reached out for it; Padway snatched it up and smacked the end of the tube meaningfully against his left palm. He knew that, even if he got out of this situation in one piece, he'd curse himself for a double-dyed knight-erranting idiot. But at the moment he was too furious to care.

The uncomfortable silence was broken by the shuffle of feet behind Padway; he saw the Goths' eyes shift from him. He glanced around. In the doorway was Fritharik, with his sword belt hitched around so the scabbard was in front, and Nerva, holding a three foot length of bronze bar-stock. Behind them came the other workmen with an assortment of blunt instruments.

"It seems," said Thiudegiskel, "that these people have no manners whatever. We should give them a lesson. But I promised my old man to lay off fighting. That's one thing about me; I always keep my promises. Come along boys." They went.

"*Whew!*" said Padway. "You boys certainly saved my bacon. Thanks."

"Oh, it was nothing," said George Menandrus airily. "I'm rather sorry they didn't stay to fight it out. I'd have enjoyed smacking their thick skulls."

"You? *Huh!*" snorted Fritharik. "Boss, the first thing I saw when I started to round the men up was this fellow sneaking out the back door. You know how I changed his mind? I said I'd hang him with a rope made of his own guts if he didn't stick! And the others, I threatened to cut their heads off and stick them on the fence palings in front of the house." He contemplated infinite calamities for a few seconds, then added: "But it won't do any good, excellent Martinus. Those fellows will have it in for us, and they're pretty influential, naturally. They can get away with anything. We'll all end in nameless graves yet."

Padway struggled mightily to get the movable parts of his equipment packed

for shipment to Florence. As far as he could remember his Procopius, Florence had not been besieged or sacked in Justinian's Gothic War, at least in the early part.

But the job was not half done when eight soldiers from the garrison descended on him and told him he was under arrest. He was getting rather used to arrest by now, so he calmly gave his foremen and editor orders about getting the equipment moved and set up, and about seeing Thomasus and trying to get in touch with him. Then he went along.

On the way he offered to stand the Goths drinks. They accepted quickly. In the wineshop he got the commander aside to suggest a little bribe to let him go. The Goth seemed to accept, and pocketed a solidus. Then when Padway, his mind full of plans for shaving his beard, getting a horse, and galloping off to Florence, broached the subject of his release, the Goth looked at him with an air of pained surprise.

"Why, most distinguished Martinus, I couldn't think of letting you go! Our commander-in-chief, the noble Liuderis, is a man of stem and rigid principles. If my men talked, he'd hear about it, and he'd break me sure. Of course I appreciate your little *gift,* and I'll try to put in a good word for you."

Padway said nothing, but he made a resolve that it would be a long day before he put in a good word for this officer.

CHAPTER VIII

Liuderis blew out his snowy whiskers and explained: "I am sorry you deceived me, Martinus. I never thought a true Arian would stoop to . . . ah . . . conniving with these pro-Greek Italians to let a swarm of Orthodox fanatics into Italy."

"Who says so?" asked Padway, more annoyed than apprehensive.

"No less a person than the . . . ah . . . noble Thiudegiskel. He told how when he visited your house, you not only insulted and reviled him, but boasted of your connections with the Imperialists. His companions corroborated him. They said you had inside information about a plan for betraying Rome, and that you were planning to move your effects elsewhere to escape any disturbances. When my men arrested you, they found that you were in fact about to move."

"My dear sir," said Padway in exasperation. "Don't you think I have *any* brains? If I were in on some plot of some sort, do you think I would go around telling the world about it?"

Liuderis shrugged. "I would not know. I am only doing my duty, which is to hold you for questioning about this secret plan. Take him away, Sigifrith."

Padway hid a shudder at the word "questioning."

If this honest blockhead got set on an idea, he'd have a swell chance of talking the fellow out of it.

The Goths had set up a prison camp at the north end of the city, between the Flaminian Way and the Tiber. Two sides of the camp were formed by a hastily erected fence, and the remaining two by the Wall of Aurelian. Padway found that two Roman patricians had preceded him in custody; both said they had been arrested on suspicion of complicity in an Imperialist plot. Several more Romans arrived within a few hours.

The camp was no escape-proof masterpiece, but the Goths made the best of it. They kept a heavy guard around the fence and along the wall. They even

had a squad camped across the Tiber, in case a prisoner got over the wall and tried to swim the river.

For three days Padway rusticated. He walked from one end of the camp to the other, and back, and forward, and back. When he got tired of walking he sat. When he got tired of sitting he walked. He talked a little with his fellow prisoners, but in a moody and abstracted manner.

He'd been a fool—well, at least he'd been badly mistaken—in supposing that he could carry out his plans with as little difficulty as in Chicago. This was a harsh, convulsive world; you had to take it into account, or you'd get caught in the gears sooner or later. Even the experts at political intrigue and uniformed banditry often came to a bad end. What chance would such a hopelessly unwarlike and unpolitical alien as himself have?

Well, what chance did he have anyway? He'd kept out of public affairs as much as possible, and here he was in a horrifying predicament as a result of a petty squabble over a brass telescope. He might just as well have gone adventuring up to the hilt. If he ever got out, he *would* go adventuring. He'd show 'em!

The fourth day failed to settle Padway's gnawing anxiety about his interrogation. The guards seemed excited about something. Padway tried to question them, but they rebuffed him. Listening to their muttering talk, he caught the word *folkmote*. That meant that the great meeting was about to be held near Terracina, at which the Goths would consider what to do about the loss of Naples.

Padway got into talk with one of the patrician prisoners.

"Bet you a solidus," he said, "that they depose Thiudahad and elect Wittigis king in his place."

The patrician, poor man, took him on.

Thomasus the Syrian arrived. He explained: "Nerva tried to get in to see you, but he couldn't afford a high enough bribe. How do they treat you?"

"Not badly. The food's not exactly good, but they give us plenty of it. What worries me is that Liuderis thinks I know all about some alleged conspiracy to betray Rome, and he may use drastic methods to try to get information out of me."

"Oh, that. There's a conspiracy afoot, all right. But I think you'll be safe for a few days anyway. Liuderis has gone off to a convention, and the Goths' affairs are all in confusion." He went on to report on the state of Padway's business. "We got the last case off this morning. Ebenezer the Jew is going up to Florence in a couple of weeks. He'll look in and see that your foremen haven't run off with all your property."

"You mean to see *whether* they've run off with it. Any war news?"

"None, except that Naples suffered pretty badly. Belisarius' Huns got out of hand when the town was captured. But I suppose you know that. You can't tell me that you haven't some magical knowledge of the future."

"Maybe. Which side do you favor, Thomasus?"

"Me? Why—I haven't thought about it much, but I suppose I favor the Goths. These Italians haven't any more fight than a lot of rabbits, so the country can't be really independent. And if we have to be ruled by outsiders, the Goths have been a lot easier on us than Justinian's tax gathers would be. Only my Orthodox friends can't be made to see it that way. Like my cousin, Antiochus, for instance. They become completely irrational when they get off on the subject of Arian heretics."

When Thomasus was ready to go, he asked Padway: "Is there anything I can bring you? I don't know what the guards will allow, but if there's something—"

Padway thought. "Yes," he said. "I'd like some painting equipment."

"Painting? You mean you're going to whitewash the Wall of Aurelian?"

"No, stuff for painting pictures. *You* know." Padway made motions.

"Oh, *that* kind of painting. Sure. It'll pass the time."

Padway wanted to get on top of the wall, to give the camp a proper looking-over for ways of escape. So when Thomasus brought his painting supplies he applied to the commander of the guards, a surly fellow named Hrotheigs, for permission. Hrotheigs took one look, and spoke one word: *"Ni!"*

Padway masked his annoyance and retired to ponder on How to Win Friends. He spent the better part of the day experimenting with his equipment, which was a bit puzzling to one unaccustomed to it. A fellow prisoner explained that you coated one of the thin boards with wax, painted in water color on this surface, and then warmed the board until the wax became soft enough to absorb the pigment. It was ticklish business; if you overheated the board, the wax melted and the colors ran.

Padway was not a professional artist by any means. But an archeologist has to know something about drawing and painting in the exercise of his profession. So the next day. Padway felt confident enough to ask Hrotheigs if he would like his portrait painted.

The Goth for the first time looked almost pleased. "*Could* you make a picture of me? I mean, one for me to keep?"

"Try to, excellent captain. I don't know how good it'll be. You may end up looking like Satanas with a gut ache."

"Huh? Like whom? Oh, *I* see! Haw! Haw! Haw! You *are* a funny fellow."

So Padway painted a picture. As far as he could see, it looked as much like any black-bearded ruffian as it did like Hrotheigs. But the Goth was delighted, asserting that it was his spit and image. The second time he made no objections to Padway's climbing the wall to paint landscapes from the top, merely detailing a guard to keep close to him at all times.

Saying that he had to pick the best vantage point for painting, Padway walked

up and down the wall the length of the camp. At the north end, where the wall turned east toward the Flaminian Gate, the ground outside sloped down for a few yards to a recess in the river bank—a small pool full of water lilies.

He was digesting this information when his attention was attracted to the camp. A couple of guards were bringing in a prisoner in rich Gothic clothes who was not cooperating. Padway recognized Thiudegiskel, the king's precious son. This was too interesting. Padway went down the ladder. *"Hails,"* he said. "Hello."

Thiudegiskel was squatting disconsolately by himself. He was somewhat disheveled, and his face had been badly bruised. Both eyes would soon be swollen shut. The Roman patricians were grinning unsympathetically at him.

He looked up. "Oh, it's you," he said. Most of the arrogance seemed to have been let out of him, like air out of a punctured balloon.

"I didn't expect to run into you here," said Padway. "You look like you had a hard time of it."

"Unh." Thiudegiskel moved his joints painfully. "A couple of those soldiers we had flogged for arresting us got hold of me." Surprisingly, he grinned, showing a broken front tooth. "Can't say I blame them much. That's one thing about me; I can always see the other fellow's point of view."

"What are you in for?"

"Hadn't you heard? I'm not the king's son any more. Or rather my old man isn't king. The convention deposed him and elected that fathead Wittigis. So Fathead has me locked up so I can't make trouble."

"Tsk, tsk. Too bad."

Thiudegiskel grinned painfully again. "Don't try to tell me *you're* sorry for me. I'm not that stupid. But say, maybe you can tell me what sort of treatment to expect, and whom to bribe, and so on."

Padway gave the young man a few pointers on getting on with the guards, then asked: "Where's Thiudahad now?"

"I don't know. The last I'd heard he'd gone up to Tivoli to get away from the heat. But he was supposed to come back down here this week. Some piece of literary research he's working on."

Between what Padway remembered of the history of the time and the information he had recently picked up, he had a good picture of the course of events. Thiudahad had been kicked out. The new king, Wittigis, would put up a loyal and determined resistance. The result would be worse than no resistance at all as far as Italy was concerned. He could not beat the Imperialists, having no brains to speak of.

He would begin his campaign with the fatal mistake of marching off to Ravenna, leaving Rome with only its normal garrison.

Neither could the Imperialists beat him with their slender forces except by years of destructive campaigning. Anything, from Padway's point of view, was

preferable to a long war. If the Imperialists did win, their conquest would prove ephemeral. Justinian should not be blamed too much; he would require supernatural foresight to foresee all this. That was the point: Padway *did* have such foresight. So wasn't it up to him to do something about it?

Padway had no violent prejudices in favor either of Gothic or of Imperial rule. Neither side had a political setup for which he could feel enthusiasm. Liberal capitalism and socialist democracy both had good points, but he did not think there was the remotest chance of establishing either one definitively in the sixth century world.

If the Goths were lazy and ignorant, the Greeks were rapacious and venal. Yet these two were the best rulers available. The sixth-century Italian was too hopelessly unmilitary to stand on his own feet, and he was supinely aware of the fact.

On the whole the Gothic regime had not had an ill effect. The Goths enforced tolerance on a people whose idea of religious liberty was freedom to hang, drown, or burn all members of sects other than their own. And the Goths looked on the peninsula as a pleasant home to be protected and preserved. This was a more benign attitude than could be expected of a savage like the Meroving monarch, Theudebert of Austrasia, or an insatiable grafter like Justinian's quartermaster-general, John of Cappadocia.

Suppose, then, he decided to work for a quick victory by the Goths instead of a quick victory for the Imperialists. How could the Gothic regime be succored? It would do no good for him to try to persuade the Goths to get rid of Wittigis. If the Gothic king, whoever he was, could be induced to take Padway's advice, something might be done. But old Thiudahad, worthless as he was by himself, *might* be managed.

A plan began to form in Padway's mind. He wished he'd told Thomasus to hurry back sooner. To keep darkness from falling.

When Thomasus did appear, Padway told him: "I want a couple of pounds of sulfur, mixed with olive oil to form a paste, and some candles. And forty feet of light rope, strong enough to support a man. Believe it or not, I got the idea from the voluptuous Julia. Remember how she acted when I fumigated the house?"

"Look here, Martinus, you're perfectly safe for the time being, so why don't you stay here instead of trying some crazy scheme of escaping?"

"Oh, I have reasons. The convention should break up today or tomorrow, from what I hear, and I've got to get out before it does."

"Listen to him! Just listen! Here I am, the best friend he has in Rome, and does he pay attention to my advice? No! He wants to break out of the camp, and maybe get an arrow through the kidney for his pains, and then go get mixed up with Gothic politics. Did you ever hear the like? Martinus, you haven't some wild idea of getting yourself elected king of the Goths, have you? Because it won't work. You have to be—"

"I know," grinned Padway. "You have to be a Goth of the noble family of the Amalings. That's why I'm in such a hurry to get out. You want the business saved so you'll get your loans back, don't you?"

"But how on earth am I going to smuggle those things in? The guards watch pretty closely."

"Bring the sulfur paste in a container at the bottom of a food basket. If they open it, say it's something my physician ordered. Better coach Vekkos to corroborate. And for the rope—let's see—I know, go to my tailor and get a green cloak like mine. Have him fasten the rope inside around the edges, lightly, so it can be ripped out quickly. Then, when you come in, lay your cloak alongside mine, and pick mine up when you go."

"Martinus, that's a crazy plan. I'll get caught sure, and what will become of my family? No, you'd better do as I say. I can't risk innocent persons' futures. What time would you want me to come around with the rope and things?"

Padway sat on the Wall of Aurelian in the bright morning sunshine. He affected to be much interested in the Tomb of Hadrian down river on the other side. The guard who was detailed to him, one Aiulf, looked over his shoulder. Padway appreciated Aiulf's interest, but he sometimes wished the Goth's beard was less long and bristly. It was a disconcerting thing to have crawling over your shoulder and down your shirt front when you were trying to get the color just right.

"You see," he explained in halting Gothic, "I hold the brush out and look past it at the thing I am painting, and mark its apparent length and height off on the brush with my thumb. That is how I keep every thing in proper proportion."

"I see," said Aiulf in equally bad Latin—both were having a little language practice. "But suppose you want to paint a small picture—how would you say with a lot of things in it just the same? The measurements on the brush would all be too large, would they not?" Aiulf, for a camp guard, was not at all stupid.

Padway's attention was actually on things other than the Tomb. He was covertly watching all the guards, and his little pile of belongings. All the prisoners did that, for obvious reasons. But Padway's interest was special. He was wondering when the candle concealed in the food basket would burn down to the sulfur paste. He had apparently had a lot of trouble that morning getting his brazier going; actually he had been setting up his little infernal machine. He also couldn't help stealing an occasional nervous glance at the soldiers across the river, and at the lily-covered pool behind him.

Aiulf grew tired of watching and retired a few steps. The guard sat down on his little stool, took up his flutelike instrument and started to play faint moaning notes. The thing sounded like a banshee lost in a rain barrel, and

never failed to give Padway the slithering creeps. But he valued Aiulf's good will too much to protest.

He worked and worked, and still his contraption showed no signs of life. The candle must have gone out; it would surely have burned down to the sulfur by now. Or the sulfur had failed to light. It would soon be time for lunch. If they called him down off the wall, it would arouse suspicion for him to say he wasn't hungry. Perhaps.

Aiulf stopped his moaning for an instant. "What is the matter with your ear, Martinus? You keep rubbing it."

"Just an itch," replied Padway. He didn't say that fingering his ear lobe was a symptom of shrieking nervousness. He kept on painting. One result of his attempt, he thought, would be the lousiest picture of a tomb ever painted by an amateur artist.

As he gave up hope, his nerves steadied. The sulfur hadn't lit, and that was that. He'd try again tomorrow . . .

Below, in the camp, a prisoner coughed; then another. Then they were all coughing. Fragments of talk floated up: "What the devil—" "Must be the tanneries—" "Can't be, they're two or three miles from here—" "That's burning sulfur, by all the saints—" "Maybe the Devil is paying us a call—" People moved around; the coughing increased; the guards trailed into the camp. Somebody located the source of the fumes and kicked Padway's pile. Instantly a square yard was covered with yellow mush over which little blue flames danced. There were strangled shouts. A thin wisp of blue smoke crawled up through the still air. The guards on the wall, including Aiulf, hurried to the ladder and down.

Padway had planned his course so carefully in his mind that he went through it almost unconscious of the individual acts. Over his brazier were two little pots of molten wax, both already pigmented. He plunged his hands into the scalding stuff and smeared his face and beard with dark green wax. It hardened almost instantly. With his fingers he then smeared three large circles of yellow wax from the other pot over the green.

Then, as if he were just strolling, he walked up to the angle of the wall, squatted down out of sight of those in the camp, ripped the rope out of the lining of his cloak, and slipped a bight over a projection at the corner of the wall. A last glance across the river showed that the soldiers over there had not, apparently, noticed anything, though they could have heard the commotion inside the wall if they had listened. Padway lowered himself down the north face of the wall, hand over hand.

He flipped the rope down after him. As he did so, a flash of sunlight on his wrist made him curse silently. His watch would be ruined by prolonged soaking; he should have thought to give it to Thomasus. He saw a loose stone in

the wall. He pulled it out, wrapped the watch in his handkerchief, put it in the hole, and replaced the stone. It took only a few seconds, but he knew he was being insanely foolish to risk the loss of time for the sake of the watch. On the other hand, being the kind of person he was, he just could not ruin the watch knowingly.

He trotted down the slope to the pond. He did not throw himself in, but walked carefully out to where it was a couple of feet deep. He sat down in the dark water, like a man getting into an over-hot tub bath, and stretched out on his back among the pond lilies until only his nose and eyes were above water. He moved the water plants around until they hid him pretty thoroughly. For the rest, he had to rely on the green of his cloak and his bizarre facial camouflage for concealment. He waited, listening to his own heart and the murmur from over the wall.

He did not have long to wait. There were shouts, the blowing of whistles, the pounding of large Gothic feet on the top of the wall. The guards waved to the soldiers across the river. Padway didn't dare turn his head far enough to see, but he could imagine a rowboat's being put out.

"*Ailôe!* The fiend seems to have vanished into thin air—"

"He's hiding somewhere, you idiot! Search, search! Get the horses out!"

Padway lay still while guards searched around the base of the wall and poked swords into bushes barely big enough to hide a Sealyham. He lay still while a small fish maddeningly investigated his left ear. He lay still, his eyes almost closed, while a couple of Goths walked around the pond and stared hard at it and him, hardly thirty feet from them. He lay still while a Goth on a horse rode splashing through the pond, actually passing within fifteen feet of him. He lay still through the whole long afternoon, while the sounds of search and pursuit rose and ebbed, and finally faded away completely.

Nevitta Gummund's son was justifiably startled when a man rose from the shadows of the bushes that lined the driveway to his house and called him by name. He had just ridden up to the farm. Hermann, in tow as usual, had his sword halfway out before Martin Padway identified himself.

He explained: "I got here a couple of hours ago, and wanted to borrow a horse. Your people said you were away at the convention, but that you'd be back sometime tonight. So I've been waiting." He went on to tell briefly of his imprisonment and escape.

The Goth bellowed. "Ha! Ha! You mean to say, ha! ha! that you lay in the pond all day, right under the noses of the guards, with your face painted up like a damned flower? Ha! ha! Christ, that's the best thing I ever heard!" He dismounted. "Come on in the house and tell me more about it. *Wheu*, you certainly look like a hog pond, old *friend!*" Later, he said more seriously: "I'd like to trust you, Martinus. By all accounts, you're a pretty reliable young

man, in spite of your funny foreign ways. But how do I know Liuderis wasn't right? There is something queer about you, you know. People say you can foresee the future, but try to hide the fact. And some of those machines of yours do smell a little bit of magic."

"I'll tell you," said Padway thoughtfully. "I can see a little bit in the future. Don't blame me; I just happen to have that power. Satanas has nothing to do with it. That is, I can sometimes see what will happen if people are allowed to do what they intend to. If I use my knowledge to intervene, that changes the future, so my vision isn't true anymore.

"In this case, I know that Wittigis will lose the war. And will lose in the worst possible way—at the end of years of fighting which will completely devastate Italy. Not his fault. He's simply built that way. The last thing I want is to see the country ruined; it would spoil a lot of plans I have. So I propose to intervene and change the natural course of events. The results may be better; they could hardly be worse."

Nevitta frowned. "You mean you're going to try to defeat the Goths quickly. I don't think I could agree to such—"

"No, I propose to win the war for you. If I can."

CHAPTER IX

If Padway wasn't mistaken, and if Procopius' history had not lied, Thiudahad ought to pass along the Flaminian Way within the next twenty-four hours in his panicky flight to Ravenna. All the way, Padway had asked people whether the king had passed that way. All said no.

Now, on the outskirts of Narnia, he was as far north as he dared go. The Flaminian Way forked at this point, and he had no way of knowing whether Thiudahad would take the new road or the old. So he and Hermann made themselves easy by the side of the road and listened to their horses cropping grass. Padway looked at his companion with a bilious eye. Hermann had taken much too much beer aboard at Ocriculum.

To Padway's questions and his instructions about taking turns at watching the road, he merely grinned idiotically and said, *"Ja, ja!"* He had finally gone to sleep in the middle of a sentence, and no amount of shaking would arouse him.

Padway walked up and down in the shade, listening to Hermann's snores and trying to think. He had not slept since the previous day, and here that whiskery slob was taking the ease that he, Padway, needed badly. Maybe he should have grabbed a couple of hours at Nevitta's—but if he'd once gotten to sleep nothing short of an earthquake would have gotten him up. His stomach was jumpy; he had no appetite; and this accursed sixth-century world didn't even have coffee to lighten the weights that dragged down the eyelids.

Suppose Thiudahad didn't show up? Or suppose he went roundabout, by the Salarian Way? Or suppose he'd already passed? Time after time he'd tensed himself as dust appeared down the road, only to have it materialize as a farmer driving an oxcart, or a trader slouching along on a mule, or a small half-naked boy driving goats.

Could his, Padway's, influence have changed Thiudahad's plans so that his course of action would be different from what it should have been? Padway saw his influence as a set of ripples spreading over a pool. By the mere fact of having known him, the lives of people like Thomasus and Fritharik had already been changed radically from what they would have been if he'd never appeared in Rome.

But Thiudahad had only seen him twice, and nothing very drastic had happened either time. Thiudahad's course in time and space might have been altered, but only very slightly. The other higher-up Goths, such as King Wittigis, ought not to have been affected at all. Some of them might have read his paper. But few of them were literary and many were plain illiterate.

Tancredi had been right about the fact that this was an entirely new branch of the tree of time, as he called it. The things that Padway had done so far, while only a fraction of what he hoped to do, couldn't help but change history somewhat. Yet he had not vanished into thin air, as he should have if this was the same history that had produced him in the year 1908 AD.

He glanced at his wrist, and remembered that his watch was cached in the Wall of Aurelian. He hoped he'd get a chance to recover it some day, and that it would be in running order when he did.

That new bit of dust down the road was probably another damned cow or flock of sheep. No, it was a man on a horse. Probably some fat Narnian burgher. He was in a hurry, whoever he was. Padway's ears caught the blowing of a hard-ridden mount; then he recognized Thiudahad.

"Hermann!" he yelled.

"Akhkhkhkhkhkhg," snored Hermann. Padway ran over and hit the Goth with his boot. Hermann said: *"Akhkhkhkhg. Akhkhkhkhg. Meina luibs-guhhg. Akhkhkhg."*

Padway gave up; the ex-king would be up to them in an instant. He swung aboard his horse and trotted out into the road with his arm up. "*Hai*, Thiudahad! My lord!"

Thiudahad kicked his horse and hauled on the reins at the same time, apparently undecided whether to stop, try to run past Padway, or turn around the way he had come. The exhausted animal thereupon put his head down and bucked.

The waters of the Nar showed blue between Thiudahad and his horse for a second; he came down on the saddle with a thump and clutched it frantically. His face was white with terror and covered with dust.

Padway leaned over and gathered up the reins. "Calm yourself, my lord," he said.

"Who . . . who . . . what—Oh, it's the publisher. What's your name? Don't tell me; I know it. Why are you stopping—We've got to get to Ravenna . . . Ravenna—"

"Calm yourself. You'd never reach Ravenna alive."

"What do you mean? Are you out to murder me, too?"

"Not at all. But, as you may have heard, I have some small talent reading the future."

"Oh, dear, yes, I've heard. What's . . . what's my future? Don't tell me I'm going to be killed! *Please* don't tell me that, excellent Martinus. I don't want to die. If they'll just let me live I won't bother anybody again, ever." The little gray-bearded man fairly gibbered with fright.

"If you'll keep still for a few minutes, I'll tell you what I can. Do you remember when, for a consideration, you swindled a noble Goth out of a beautiful heiress who had been promised to him in marriage?"

"Oh, dear me. That would be Optaris Winithar's son, wouldn't it? Only don't say 'swindled,' excellent Martinus. Merely . . . ah . . . exerted my influence on the side of the other man. But why?"

"Wittigis gave Optaris a commission to hunt you down and kill you. He's following you now, riding day and night. If you continue toward Ravenna, this Optaris will catch up with you before you get there, pull you off your horse, and cut your throat—like this, *khh*." Padway clutched his own throat with one hand, tilted up his chin, and drew a finger across his Adam's apple.

Thiudahad covered his face with his hands. "What'll I do? What'll I do? If I could get to Ravenna, I have friends there—"

"That's what *you* think. I know better."

"But isn't there anything? I mean, is Optaris fated to kill me no matter what I do? Can't we hide?"

"Perhaps. My prophecy is good only if you try to carry out your original plan."

"Well, we'll hide, then."

"All right, just as soon as I get this fellow awake." Padway indicated Hermann.

"Why wait for him? Why not just leave him?"

"He works for a friend of mine. He was supposed to take care of me, but it's turned out the other way around." They dismounted, and Padway resumed his efforts to arouse Hermann.

Thiudahad sat down on the grass and moaned: "Such ingratitude! And I was such a good king—"

"Sure," said Padway acidly, "except for breaking your oath to Amalaswentha not to interfere in public affairs, and then having her murdered—"

"But you don't understand, excellent Martinus. She had our noblest patriot, Count Tulum, murdered, along with those other two friends of her son Athalarik—"

"—and intervening—for a consideration, again—in the last Papal election; offering to sell Italy to Justinian in return for an estate near Constantinople and an annuity—"

"*What?* How did you know—I mean it's a lie!"

"I know lots of things. To continue: neglecting the defense of Italy; failing to relieve Naples—"

"Oh, dear me. You don't understand, I tell you. I hate all this military business. I admit I'm no soldier; I'm a scholar. So I leave it to my generals. That's only sensible, isn't it?"

"As events have proved—no."

"Oh, dear. Nobody understands me," moaned Thiudahad. "I'll tell you, Martinus, why I did nothing about Naples. I knew it was no use. I had gone to a Jewish magician, Jeconias of Naples, who has a great reputation for successful prophecy. Everybody knows the Jews are good at that. This man took thirty hogs, and put ten in each of three pens. One pen was labeled 'Goths,' one 'Italians,' and one 'Imperialists.' He starved them for weeks. We found that all the 'Goths' had died; that the 'Italians' were some of the dead, and the rest had lost their hair; but the 'Imperialists' were doing fine. So we knew the Goths were bound to lose. In that case, why sacrifice a lot of brave boys' lives to no effect?"

"Bunk," said Padway. "My prophecies are as good as that fat faker's any day. Ask my friends. But any prophecy is good only as long as you follow your original plans. If you follow yours, you'll get your throat cut like one of your magical hogs. If you want to live, you'll do as I say and like it."

"What? Now, look here, Martinus, even if I'm not king anymore, I'm of noble birth, and I won't be dictated to—"

"Suit yourself." Padway rose and walked toward his horse. "I'll ride down the road a way. When I meet Optaris, I'll tell him where to find you."

"*Eek!* Don't do that! I'll do what you say! I'll do anything, only don't let that awful man catch me!"

"All right. If you obey orders, I may even be able to get you back your kingship. But it'll be purely nominal this time, understand." Padway didn't miss the crafty gleam in Thiudahad's eyes. Then the eyes shifted past Padway.

"Here he comes! It's the murderer, Optaris!" he squealed.

Padway spun around. Sure enough, a burly Goth was poking up the road toward them. This was a fine state of affairs, thought Padway. He'd wasted so much time talking that the pursuer had caught up with them. He should have had a few hours' leeway still; but there the man was. What to do; what to do?

He had no weapon but a knife designed for cutting steaks rather than human throats. Thiudahad had no sword, either.

To Padway, brought up in a world of Thompson submachine-guns, swords seemed silly weapons, always catching you between the knees. So it had never occurred to him to form the habit of toting one. He realized his error as his eye caught one flash of Optaris' blade. The Goth leaned forward and kicked his horse straight at them.

Thiudahad stood rooted to the spot, trembling violently and making little meowing sounds of terror. He wet his dry lips and squealed one word over and over: "*Armaio!* Mercy!" Optaris grinned through his beard and swung his right arm up.

At the last instant Padway dived at the ex-king and tackled him, rolling him out of the way of Optaris' horse. He scrambled up as Optaris reined in furiously, the animal's hoofs kicking dust forward as they braked. Thiudahad got up, too, and bolted for the shelter of the trees. With a yell of rage Optaris jumped to the ground and took after him. Meantime, Padway had had a rush of brains to the head. He bent over Hermann, who was beginning to revive, tore Hermann's sword out of the scabbard, and sprinted to cut off Optaris. It wasn't necessary. Optaris saw him coming and started for him, evidently preferring to settle with Padway before the latter could take him in flank.

Now Padway cursed himself for all kinds of a fool. He had only the crudest theoretical knowledge of fencing, and no tactical experience whatever. The heavy Gothic broadsword was unfamiliar and uncomfortable in his sweaty hand. He could see the whites of Optaris' eyes as the Goth trotted up to him, took his measure, shifted his weight, and whipped his sword arm up for a back-hand slash.

Padway's parry was more instinctive than designed. The blades met with a great clang, and Padway's borrowed sword went sailing away, end over end, into the woods. Quick as a flash Optaris struck again, but met only air and swung himself halfway around. If Padway was an incompetent fencer, there was nothing the matter with his legs. He sprinted after his sword, found it, and kept right on running with Optaris panting heavily after him. He'd been a minor quarter-mile star in college; if he could run the legs off Optaris maybe the odds would be nearer even when they finally—*umph!* He tripped over a root and sprawled on his face.

Somehow he rolled over and got to his feet before Optaris came up to him. And, somehow, he got himself between Optaris and a pair of big oaks that grew too close together to be squeezed between. So there was nothing for him to do but stand and take it. As the Goth clumped forward and swung his sword over his head, Padway, in a last despairing gesture, thrust as far as he could at Optaris' exposed chest, more with the idea of keeping the man off than of hurting him.

Now, Optaris was an able fighter. But the swordplay of his age was entirely with the edge. Nobody had ever worked a simple stop thrust on him. So it was no fault of his that in his effort to get within cutting distance of Padway he spitted himself neatly on the outthrust blade. His own slash faltered and ended against one of the oaks, The Goth gasped, tried to breathe, and his thick legs slowly sagged. He fell, pulling the sword out of his body. His hands clawed at the dirt, and a great river of blood ran from his mouth.

When Thiudahad and Hermann came up they found Padway vomiting quietly against a tree trunk. He barely heard their congratulations.

He was reacting to his first homicide with a combination of humane revulsion and buck fever. He was too sensible to blame himself much, but he was still no mere thoughtless adventurer to take a killing lightly. To save Thiudahad's worthless neck, he had killed one who was probably a better man, who had a legitimate grudge against the ex-king, and who had never harmed Padway. If he could only have talked to Optaris, or have wounded him slightly . . . But that was water over the dam; the man was as dead as one of John the Egyptian's customers. The living presented a more immediate problem.

He said to Thiudahad: "We'd better disguise you. If you're recognized, Wittigis will send another of your friends around to call. Better take that beard off first. It's too bad you already have your hair cut short, Roman style."

"Maybe," said Hermann, "could cut him off nose. Then nobody recognize."

"Oh!" cried Thiudahad, clutching the member indicated. "Oh, dear me! You wouldn't *really* disfigure me that way, most excellent, most noble Martinus?"

"Not if you behave yourself, my lord. And your clothes are entirely too fancy. Hermann, could I trust you to go into Narnia and buy an Italian peasant's Sunday-go-to-church outfit?"

"*Ja, ja,* you give me *silubr.* I go."

"What?" squeaked Thiudahad. "I will not get myself up in such an absurd costume! A prince of the Amalings has his dignity—"

Padway looked at him narrowly and felt the edge of Hermann's sword. He said silkily, "Then, my lord, you *do* prefer the loss of your nose? No? I thought not. Give Hermann a couple of solidi. We'll make a prosperous farmer of you. How are you on Umbrian dialect?"

Chapter X

Liuderis Oskar's son, commander of the garrison of the city of Rome, looked out of his office window gloomily at the gray September skies. The world had been turning upside down too often for this simple, loyal soul. First Thiudahad is deposed and Wittigis elected king. Then Wittigis, by some mysterious process, convinces himself and other Gothic leaders that the way to deal with the redoubtable Belisarius is to run off to Ravenna, leaving an inadequate garrison in Rome. And now it transpires that the citizens are becoming dissatisfied; worse, that his troops are afraid to try to hold the city against the Greeks; worse yet, that Pope Silverius, blandly violating his oaths to Wittigis on the ground that the king is a heretic, has been corresponding with Belisarius with the object of arranging a bloodless surrender of the city.

But all these shocks were mild compared to that which he got when the two callers announced by his orderly turned out to be Martin Padway and ex-King Thiudahad, whom he recognized immediately despite his clean-shaven state. He simply sat, stared, and blew out his whiskers. "You!" he said. "You!"

"Yes, us," said Padway mildly. "You know Thiudahad, King of the Ostrogoths and Italians, I believe. And you know me. I'm the king's new quaestor, by the way." (That meant he was a combination of secretary, legal draftsman, and ghost writer.)

"But . . . but we have another king! You two are supposed to have prices on your heads or something."

"Oh, that," smiled Padway negligently. "The Royal council was a little hasty in its action as we hope to show them in time. We'll explain—"

"But where have you been? And how did you escape from my camp? And what are you doing here?"

"One thing at a time, please, excellent Liuderis. First, we've been up at Florence collecting a few supplies for the campaign. Second—"

"What campaign?"

"—second, I have ways of getting out of camps denied to ordinary men. Third, we're here to lead your troops against the Greeks and destroy them."

"You are mad, both of you! I shall have you locked up until—"

"Now, now, wait until you hear us. Do you know of my . . . ah . . . little gifts for seeing the future results of men's actions?"

"Unh, I *have* heard things. But if you think you can seduce me away from my duty by some wild tale—"

"Exactly, my dear sir. The king will tell you how I foresaw Optaris' unfortunate attempt on his life, and how I used my knowledge to thwart Optaris' plans. If you insist, I can produce more evidence.

"For instance, I can tell you that you'll get no help from Ravenna. That Belisarius will march up the Latin Way in November. That the Pope will persuade your garrison to march away before they arrive. And that *you* will remain at your post, and be captured and sent to Constantinople."

Liuderis gasped. "Are you in league with Satanas? Or perhaps you are the Devil himself? I have not told a soul of my determination to stay if my garrison leaves, and yet you know of it."

Padway smiled. "No such luck, excellent Liuderis. Just an ordinary flesh-and-blood man who happens to have a few special gifts. Moreover, Wittigis will eventually lose his war, though only after years of destructive fighting. That is, all these things will happen unless you change your plans."

It took an hour of talk to wear Liuderis down to the point where he asked: "Well, what plans for operations against the Greeks did you have in mind?"

Padway replied: "We know they'll come by the Latin Way, So there's no point in leaving Terracina garrisoned. And we know about when they'll come. Counting the Terracina garrison, about how many men could you collect by the end of next month?"

Liuderis blew out his whiskers and thought. "If I called in the men from Formia—six thousand, perhaps seven. About half and half archers and lancers. That is, assuming that King Wittigis did not hear of it and interfere. But news travels slowly."

"If I could show you how you'd have a pretty good chance against the Greeks, would you lead them out?"

"I do not know. I should have to think. Perhaps. If as you say our king—excuse me, noble Thiudahad, I mean the *other* king—is bound to be defeated, it might be worth taking a chance on. What would you do?"

"Belisarius has about ten thousand men," replied Padway. "He'll leave two thousand to garrison Naples and other southern towns. He'll still out-number us a little. I notice that your brave Wittigis ran off when he had twenty thousand available."

Liuderis shrugged and looked embarrassed. "It is true, that was not a wise

move. But he expects many thousands more from Gaul and Dalmatia."

"Have your men had any practice at night attacks?" asked Padway.

"Night attacks? You mean to assault the enemy at *night?* No. I never heard of such a proceeding. Battles are always fought in the daytime. A night attack does not sound very practical to me. How would you keep control of your men?"

"That's just the point. Nobody ever heard of the Goths making a night attack, so it ought to have some chance of success. But it'll require special training. First, you'll have to throw out patrols on the roads leading north, to turn back people who might carry the news to Ravenna. And I need a couple of good catapult engineers. I don't want to depend entirely on the books in the libraries for my artillery. If none of your troops know anything about catapults, we ought to be able to dredge up a Roman or two who does. And you might appoint me to your staff—you don't have staffs? Then it's time you started—at a reasonable salary—"

Padway lay on a hilltop near Fregellae and watched the Imperialists through a telescope. He was surprised that Belisarius, as the foremost soldier in his age, hadn't thrown scouts out farther, but, then this was 536. His advance party consisted of a few hundred mounted Huns and Moors, who galloped about, pushing up side roads a few hundred yards and racing back. Then came two thousand of the famous *cataphracti* or cuirassiers, trotting in orderly formation. The low, cold sun glittered on the scales of their armor. Their standard was a blown-up leather serpent writhing from the top of a long pole, like a balloon from Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade.

These were the best and certainly the most versatile soldiers in the world, and everybody was afraid of them. Padway, watching their cloaks and scarves flutter behind them, didn't feel too confident himself. Then came three thousand Isaurian archers marching afoot, and finally two thousand more cuirassiers.

Liuderis, at Padway's elbow, said: "That is some sort of signal. *Ja*, I believe they are going to camp there. How did you know they would pick that spot, Martinus?"

"Simple. You remember that little device I had on the wheel of that wagon? That measures distance. I measured the distances along the road. Knowing their normal day's march and the point they started from, the rest was easy."

"*Tsk, tsk*, wonderful. How do you think of all those things?" Liuderis' big, trustful eyes reminded Padway of those of a St. Bernard. "Shall I have the engineers set up Brunhilde now?"

"Not yet. When the sun sets, we'll measure the distance to the camp."

"How will you do that without being seen?"

"I'll show you when the time comes. Meanwhile make sure that the boys keep quiet and out of sight."

Liuderis frowned. "They will not like having to eat a cold supper. If we do not watch them, somebody will surely start a fire."

Padway sighed. He'd had plenty of sad experience with the temperamental and undisciplined Goths. One minute they were as excited as small boys over the plans of Mysterious Martinus, as they called him; the next day they were growling on the edge of mutiny about the enforcement of some petty regulation. Since Padway felt that it wouldn't do for him to order them around directly, poor Liuderis had to take it.

The Byzantines set up their camp with orderly promptitude. Those, Padway thought, were real soldiers. You could accomplish something with men like that to command. It would be a long time before the Goths attained such a smooth perfection of movement. The Goths were still obsessed with childish, slam-bang ideas of warfare.

Witness the grumbling that had greeted Padway's requisition of a squad of engineers. Running catapults was a sissy job, inconsistent with knightly honor.

And well-born lancers fight on foot like a lot of serfs? Perish the thought! Padway had seduced them away from their beloved horses by an ingenious method: He, or rather Liuderis at his suggestion, formed a company of pikemen, loudly announcing that only the best men would be admitted, and that furthermore candidates would be made to *pay* for admission. Padway explained that there was no type of troop wherein morale and discipline were as vital as in heavy infantry, because one man flinching from a cavalry charge might break the line of spears and let the enemy in.

It was getting too dark for his telescope to be useful. He could make out the general's standard in front of a big tent. Perhaps Belisarius was one of those little figures around it. If he had a machine-gun—but he didn't have, and never would. You need machines to make a machine-gun, and machines to make those machines, and so on. If he ever got a workable muzzle-loading musket he'd be doing well.

The standard no doubt bore the letters S. P. Q. R.—the Senate and the People of Rome. An army of Hunnish, Moorish, and Anatolian mercenaries, commanded by a Thracian Slav who worked for a Dalmatian autocrat who reigned in Constantinople and didn't even rule the city of Rome, called himself the Army of the Roman Republic and saw nothing funny in the act.

Padway got up, grunting at the weight of his shirt of scale mail. He wished a lot of things, such as that he'd had time to train some mounted archers. They were the only troops who could really deal on even terms with the deadly Byzantine cuirassiers. But he'd have to hope that darkness would nullify the Imperialists' advantage in missile fire.

He superintended the driving of a stake into the ground and paced off the base of a triangle. With a little geometry he figured the quarter-mile distance

that was Brunhilde's range, and ordered the big catapult set up. The thing required eleven wagon-loads of lumber, even though it was not of record size. Padway hovered around his engineers nervously, jumping and hissing reprimands when somebody dropped a piece of wood.

Snatches of song came from the camp. Apparently Padway's scheme of leaving a wagon-load of brandy where foragers would be sure to find it had had results, despite Belisarius' well-known strictness with drunken soldiers.

The bags of sulfur paste were brought out. Padway looked at his watch, which he had recovered from the hole in the wall. It was nearly midnight, though he'd have sworn the job hadn't taken over an hour.

"All ready?" he asked. "Light the first bag." The oil-soaked rags were lit. The bag was placed in the sling. Padway himself pulled the lanyard. *Wht-bam!* said Brunhilde. The bag did a fiery parabola. Padway raced up the little knoll that masked his position. He missed seeing the bag land in the camp. But the drunken songs ended, instead there was a growing buzz as of a nest of irritated hornets. Behind him whips cracked and ropes creaked in the dark, as the horses heaved on the block-and-tackle he'd rigged up for quick recocking. *Wht-bam!* The fuse came out of the second bag in midair, so that it continued its course to the camp unseen and harmless. Never mind, another would follow in a few seconds. Another did. The buzz was louder, and broken by clear, high-pitched commands. *Wht-bam!*

"Liuderis!" Padway called. "Give your signal!"

Over in the camp the horse lines began to scream. The horses didn't like the sulfur dioxide. Good; maybe the Imperialist cavalry would be immobilized. Under the other noises Padway heard the clank and shuffle of the Goths, getting under way. Something in the camp was burning brightly. Its light showed a company of Goths on Padway's right picking their way over the broken, weed-covered ground. Their big round shields were painted white for recognition, and every man had a wet rag tied over his nose. Padway thought they ought to be able to frighten the Imperialists if they couldn't do anything else. On all sides the night was alive with the little orange twinkle of firelight on helmets, scale skirts, and sword blades.

As the Goths closed in, the noise increased tenfold, with the addition of organized battle yells, the flat snap of bowstrings, and finally the blacksmith's symphony of metal on metal. Padway could see "his" men, black against the fires, grow smaller and then drop out of sight into the camp ditch. Then there was only a confused blur of movement and a great din as the attackers scrambled up the other side—invisible until they popped up into the firelight again—and mixed in with the defenders.

One of the engineers called to say that that was all the sulfur bags, and what should they do now?

"Stand by for further orders," replied Padway.

"But, Captain, can't we go fight? We're missing all the fun!"

"*Ni*, you can't! You're the only engineer corps west of the Adriatic that's worth a damn, and I won't have you getting yourselves killed off!"

"Huh!" said a voice in the dark. "This is a cowardly way of doing, standing back here. Let's go, boys. To hell with Mysterious Martinus!" And before Padway could do anything, the twenty-odd catapult men trotted off toward the fires.

Padway angrily called for his horse and rode off to find Liuderis. The commander was sitting his horse in front of a solid mass of lancers. The firelight picked out their helms and faces and shoulders, and the forest of vertical lances. They looked like something out of a Wagnerian opera.

Padway asked: "Has there been any sign of a sortie yet?"

"No."

"There will be, if I know Belisarius. Who's going to lead this troop?"

"I am," said Liuderis.

"Oh, lord! I thought I explained why the commander should—"

"I know, Martinus," said Liuderis firmly. "You have lots of ideas. But you're young. I'm an old soldier, you know. Honor requires that I lead my men. Look, isn't something doing in the camp?"

True enough, the Imperial cavalry was coming out. Belisarius had, despite his difficulties, managed to collect a body of manageable horses and cuirassiers to ride them. As they watched, this group thundered out the main gate, the Gothic infantry scattering in all directions before them. Liuderis shouted, and the mass of Gothic knights clattered off, picking up speed as they went. Padway saw the Imperialists swing widely to take the attacking foe in the rear, and then Liuderis' men hit them. He heard the crash as the forces met, and then everything was dark confusion for a few minutes.

Little by little the noise died. Padway wondered just what had happened. He felt silly, sitting alone on his horse a quarter mile from all the action. Theoretically, he was where the staff, the reserves, and the artillery ought to be. But there were no reserves, their one catapult stood deserted off in the dark somewhere, and the artillerists and staff were exchanging sword strokes with the Imperialists up front.

With a few wordless disparagements of sixth-century ideas of warfare, Padway trotted toward the camp. He came across a Goth peacefully tying up his shin with a cloth torn from his tunic, another who clutched his stomach and moaned, and a corpse. Then he came upon a considerable body of dismounted Imperial cuirassiers standing weaponless.

"What are you doing?" Padway asked.

One replied: "We're prisoners. There were some Goths supposed to be guarding us, but they got angry at missing the looting, so they went off to the camp."

"What became of Belisarius?"

"Here he is." The prisoner indicated a man sitting on the ground with his head in his hands. "A Goth hit him on the head and stunned him. He's just coming to. Do you know what will be done with us, noble sir?"

"Nothing very drastic, I imagine. You fellows wait here until I send somebody for you." Padway rode on toward the camp. Soldiers were strange people, he thought. With Belisarius to lead them and a fair chance to use their famous bow-plus-lance tactics, the *cataphracti* could lick thrice their number of another troop. Now, because their leader had been conked on the head, they were as meek as lambs.

There were more corpses and wounded near the camp, and a few riderless horses calmly grazing. In the camp itself Imperial soldiers, Isaurians and Moors and Huns, stood around in little clumps, holding bits of clothing to their noses against the reek of sulfur fumes. Goths ran hither and thither among them looking for movable property worth stealing.

Padway dismounted and asked a couple of the looters where Liuderis was. They said they didn't know, and went on about their business. He found an officer he knew, Gaina by name. Gaina was squatting by a corpse and weeping. He turned a streaked, bearded face up to Padway.

"Liuderis is dead," he said between sobs. "He was killed in the melee when we struck the Greek cavalry."

"Who's that?" Padway indicated the corpse.

"My younger brother."

"I'm sorry. But won't you come with me and get things organized? There are a hundred cuirassiers out there with nobody guarding them. If they come to their senses they'll make a break—"

"No, I will stay with my little brother. You go on, Martinus. You can take care of things." Gaina dissolved in fresh tears.

Padway hunted until he found another officer, Gudareths, who seemed to have some sort of wits about him. At least, he was making frantic efforts to round up a few troopers to guard the surrendered Imperialists. The minute he turned his back on his men, they melted off into the general confusion of the camp.

Padway grabbed him. "Forget them," he snapped. "Liuderis is dead, I hear, but Belisarius is alive. If we don't nab him—"

So they took a handful of Goths in tow and marched back to where the Imperial general still sat among his men. They moved the lesser prisoners away, and set several men to guard Belisarius. Then they spent a solid hour rounding up troopers and prisoners and getting them into some sort of order.

Gudareths, a small, cheerful man, talked continually: "That was some charge, some charge. Never saw a better, even in the battle against the Gepids on the Danube. We took them in flank, nearest thing you ever saw. The Greek general fought like a wild man, until I hit him over the head. Broke my sword,

it did. Best stroke I ever made, by God. Even harder than the time I cut off that Bulgarian Hun's head, five years ago. Oh, yes. I've killed hundreds of enemies in my time. Thousands, even. I'm sorry for the poor devils. I'm not really a bloodthirsty fellow, but they will try to stand up against me. Say, where were you during the charge?" He looked sharply at Padway, like an accusatory chipmunk before rambling on.

"I was supposed to be running the artillery. But my men ran off to join the fight. And by the time I arrived it was all over."

Another chatterbox broke in: "*Aiw*, no doubt, no doubt. Like one time when I was in a battle with the Burgunds. My orders kept me out of the thick until the fighting was nearly over. Of course, when I arrived I must have killed at least twenty—"

The train of troops and prisoners headed north on the Latin Way. Padway, still a little bewildered to find himself in command of the Gothic army, simply by virtue of having taken over Liuderis' responsibilities on the night of confusion, rode near the front. The best are always the first to go, he thought sadly, remembering the simple, honest old Santa Claus who lay dead in one of the wagons in the rear, and thinking of the mean and treacherous little king whom he would have to manage when he got back to Rome.

Belisarius, jogging along beside him, was even less cheerful. The Imperial general was a surprisingly young man, in his middle thirties, tall and a bit stout, with gray eyes and curly brown beard. His Slavic ancestry was highlighted by his wide cheek bones.

He said gravely: "Excellent Martinus, I ought to thank you for the consideration you showed my wife. You went out of your way to make her comfortable on this sad journey."

"Quite all right, illustrious Belisarius. Maybe you'll capture me some day."

"That seems hardly likely, after this fiasco. By the way, if I may ask, just what are you? I hear you called Mysterious Martinus! You're no Goth, nor yet an Italian, by your speech."

Padway stated his impressively vague connection to America.

"Really? They must be a people skilled in war, these Americans. I knew when the fight started that I was not dealing with any barbarian commander. The timing was much too good, especially on that cavalry charge. *Phew!* I can still smell that damnable sulfur!"

Padway saw no point in explaining that his previous military experience consisted of one year of ROTC in a Chicago high school. Instead he asked: "How would you like the idea of coming over to our side? We need a good general, and as Thiudahad's quaestor, I'll have my hands full now."

Belisarius frowned. "No, I swore an oath to Justinian."

"So you did. But as you'll probably hear, I can sometimes see a little into

the future. And I can tell you that the more faithful you are to Justinian, the meaner and more ungrateful he'll be to you. He'll—"

"I said no!" said Belisarius sternly. "You can do what you like with me. But the word of Belisarius is not to be questioned."

Padway argued some more. But, remembering his Procopius, he had little hope of shaking the Thracian's stern rectitude. Belisarius was a fine fellow, but his rigid virtue made him a slightly uncomfortable companion. He asked: "Where's your secretary, Procopius of Caesarea?"

"I do not know. He was in southern Italy, and should be on his way to join us."

"Good. We shall need a competent historian."

Belisarius' eyes widened "How do you know about the histories for which he's collecting notes? I thought he'd told nobody but me."

Padway smiled. "Oh, I have my private ways. That's why they. call me Mysterious Martinus."

At dawn they marched into Rome by the Latin Gate, north past the Circus Maximus and the Coliseum, and up the Quirinal Valley to the Old Viminal Gate and the Praetorian Camp.

Here Padway gave orders to encamp the prisoners, and told Gudareths to set a guard over them. That done, Padway found himself in the midst of a crowd of weary officers who looked at him expectantly. He could not think what orders to give next.

He rubbed his ear lobe for a few seconds, then took the captive Belisarius aside, "Say, illustrious general," he said in a low voice, "what in hell should I do next? This military business isn't my proper trade."

There was a hint of amusement in Belisarius broad and usually solemn face. He answered: "Call out your paymaster and have him settle the men's wages. Better give them a little bonus for winning the battle. Detail an officer to round up some physicians to tend the wounded; at least I don't suppose a barbarian army like this has its own medical corps. Choose a man whose duty it is to check the rolls. I hear the commander of the Rome garrison was killed. Appoint a man in his place, and have the garrison returned to barracks. Tell the commanders of the other contingents to find what lodging they can for their men. If they are to board at private houses, say the owners will be compensated at standard rates. You can settle with them later. But first you ought to make a speech."

"*Me* make a speech?" hissed Padway in horror. "My Gothic is lousy—"

"That's part of a captain's business, you know. Tell your men what good soldiers they are. Make it short. They won't listen very closely anyway."

CHAPTER XI

After some searching Padway located Thiudahad in the Ulpian Library. The little man was barricaded behind a huge load of books. Four bodyguards sprawled on a table, a bench, and the floor, snoring thunderously. The librarian was staring at them with a look compounded of hydrofluoric acid and cobra venom, but did not dare protest.

Thiudahad looked up blearily. "Oh, yes, it's the publisher fellow. Martinus, isn't it?"

"That's right, my lord. I might add that I'm your new quaestor."

"What? What? Who told you so?"

"You did. You appointed me."

"Oh, dear me, so I did. Silly of me. When I get engrossed in books I really don't know what's going on. Let's see, you and Liuderis were going to fight the Imperialists, weren't you?"

"*Hoc ille,* my lord. It's all over."

"Hmm. I suppose you sold out to Belisarius, didn't you? I hope you arranged for an estate and an annuity from Justinian for me."

"It wasn't necessary, my lord. We won."

"What?"

Padway gave a resume of the last three days' events. "And you'd better get to bed early tonight, my lord. "We're leaving in the morning for Florence."

"Florence? Why, in heaven's name?"

"We're on our way to intercept your generals, Asinar and Grippas. They're coming back from Dalmatia, having been ordered out by the Imperial general, Constantianus. If we can catch them before they get to Ravenna and learn about Wittigis, we might be able to get your crown back."

Thiudahad sighed. "Yes, I suppose we ought to. But how did you know

that Asinar and Gippas were coming home?"

"Trade secret, my lord. I've also sent a force of two thousand to reoccupy Naples. It's held by General Herodianus with a mere three hundred, so there shouldn't be much trouble."

Thiudahad narrowed his watery eyes. "You do get things done, Martinus. If you can deliver that vile usurper Wittigis into my hands—*aaah!* I'll send clear to Constantinople for a torturer, if I can't find one ingenious enough in Italy!"

Padway did not answer that one, having his own plans for Wittigis. He said instead: "I have a pleasant surprise for you. The pay chests of the Imperial army—"

"Yes?" Thiudahad's eyes gleamed. "They're mine, of course, Very considerate of you, excellent Martinus."

"Well, I did have to dip into them a little to pay our troops and clear up the army's bills. But you'll find the rest an agreeable addition to the royal purse. I'll be waiting for you at home."

Padway neglected to state that he had sequestered over half the remainder and deposited the money with Thomasus. Who owns the pay chests of a captured army, especially when the captor is a volunteer theoretically serving one of two rival kings, was a question that the legal science of the time was hardly equipped to decide. In any event Padway was sure he could make better use of the money than Thiudahad. *I'm becoming quite a hardened criminal,* he thought with pride.

Padway rode up to Cornelius Anicius' home. Its rhetorical owner was out at the baths, but Dorothea came out. Padway had to admit that it made him feel pretty good to sit on a powerful horse in a (to him) romantic get-up, with cloak and boots and all, and report to one of the prettier girls of Rome on his success.

She said: "You know, Martinus, father was silly at first about your social standing. But after all you've done he's forgotten about that. Of course he is not enthusiastic about Gothic rule. But he much prefers Thiudahad, who is a scholar, to that savage Wittigis."

"I'm glad of that. I like your old man."

"Everybody's talking about you now. They call you 'Mysterious Martinus.' "

"I know. Absurd, isn't it?"

"Yes. You never seemed very mysterious to me, in spite of your foreign background."

"That's great. You're not afraid of me, are you?"

"Not in the least. If you made a deal with Satanas as some people hint, I'm sure the Devil got the worst of it." They laughed. She added: "It's nearly dinner time. Won't you stay? Father will be back any time."

"I'm sorry, but I can't possibly. We're off to the wars again tomorrow."

As he rode off, he thought: If I *should* change my mind about the expediency of marriage, I'd know where to begin. She's attractive and pleasant, and has what passes for a good education here . . .

Padway made one more attempt to shake Belisarius, but without success. He did, however, enlist five hundred of the Imperial cuirassiers as a personal guard. His share of the Imperialist loot would suffice to pay them for some weeks. After that he'd see.

The trip to Florence was anything but pleasant. It rained most of the way, with intermittent snow squalls as they climbed toward the city of Flowers. Being in a hurry, Padway took only cavalry.

In Florence he sent his officers around to buy warmer clothes for the troops, and looked in on his business. It seemed to be surviving, though Fritharik said: "I don't trust any of them, excellent boss. I'm sure the foreman and this George Menandrus have been stealing, though I can't prove it. I don't understand all this writing and figuring. If you leave them alone long enough they'll steal everything, and then where'll we be? Out in the cold, headed for a pair of nameless graves."

"We'll see," said Padway. He called in the treasurer, Proclus Proclus, and asked to see the books. Proclus Proclus instantly looked apprehensive, but he got the books. Padway waded into the figures. They were all nice and neat, since he himself had taught the treasurer double-entry bookkeeping. And his employees were astounded to hear Padway burst into a shout of laughter.

"What . . . what is it, noble sir?" asked Proclus Proclus.

"Why, you poor fool, didn't you realize that with my system of bookkeeping, your little thefts would stick up in the accounts like a sore toe? Look here: thirty solidi last month, and nine solidi and some sesterces only last week. You might just as well have left a signed receipt every time you stole something!"

"What . . . what are you going to do to me?"

"Well—I *ought* to have you jailed and flogged." Padway was silent for a while and watched Proclus Proclus squirm. "But I hate to have your family suffer. And I certainly oughtn't to keep you on, after this. But I'm pretty busy, and I can't take the time to train a new treasurer to keep books in a civilized manner. So I'll just take a third of your salary until these little *borrowings* of yours are paid back."

"Thank you, thank you kindly, sir. But just to be fair—George Menandrus ought to pay a share of it, too. He—"

"Liar!" shouted the editor.

"Liar yourself! Look, I can prove it. Here's an item for one solidus, November 10th. And on November 11th George shows up with a pair of new shoes and a bracelet. I know where he bought them. On the 15th—"

"How about it, George?" asked Padway.

Menandrus finally confessed, though he insisted that the thefts were merely temporary borrowings to tide him over until pay day.

Padway divided the total liability between the two of them. He warned them sternly against recidivism. Then he left a set of plans with the foreman for new machines and metal-working processes, including plans for a machine for spinning copper plate into bowls. The intelligent Nerva caught on immediately.

As Padway was leaving, Fritharik asked him: "Can't I go with you, excellent Martinus? It's very dull here in Florence. And you need somebody to take care of you. I've saved up almost enough to get my jeweled sword back, and if you'll let—"

"No, old man. I'm sorry, but I've got to have *one* person I can trust here. When this damned war and politics is over, we'll see."

Fritharik sighed gustily. "Oh, very well, if you insist. But I hate to think of your going around unprotected with all these treacherous Greeks and Italians and Goths. You'll end in an unmarked grave yet, I fear."

They shivered and skidded across the icy Apennines to Bologna. Padway resolved to have his men's horses shod if he could ever get a few days to spare—stirrups had been invented but not horseshoes. From Bologna to Padua—still largely in ruins from its destruction by Attila's Huns—the road was no longer the splendid stone-paved affair they had earlier traveled on, but a track in the mud. However, the weather turned almost spring-like, which was something.

At Padua they found they had missed the Dalmatian force by one day. Thiudahad wanted to halt. "Martinus," he whined, "you've dragged my old bones all over northern Italy, and nearly frozen me to death. That's not considerate. You do owe your king some consideration, don't you?"

Padway repressed his irritation with some effort. "My lord, *do* you or *don't* you want your crown back?"

So poor Thiudahad had to go along. By hard riding they caught up with the Dalmatian army halfway to Atria. They heaved past thousands and thousands of Goths, afoot and on horses. There must have been well over fifty thousand of them. All these big, tough-looking men had skedaddled at the mere thought that Count Constantianus was approaching.

The count had had only a small force, but Padway was the only one present who knew that, and his source of information was not strictly kosher. The Goths cheered Thiudahad and Padway's Gothic lancers, and stared and muttered at the five hundred cuirassiers. Padway had made his guard don Gothic helmets and Italian military cloaks in lieu of the spiked steel helmets and burnoose-like mantles they had worn. But still their shaven chins, tight pants, and high yellow boots made them sufficiently different to arouse suspicion.

Padway found the two commanders near the head of the column. Asinar

was tall and Grippas was short, but otherwise both were just a couple of middle-aged and bewhiskered barbarians. They respectfully saluted Thiudahad, who seemed to move slightly from so much latent force. Thiudahad introduced Padway as his new prefect—no, he meant his new quaestor.

Asinar whispered to Padway: "In Padua we heard a rumor that war and usurpation had been going on in Italy. Just what *is* the news, anyway?"

Padway was for once thankful that his telegraph hadn't been operating that far north. He laughed scornfully. "Oh, our brave General Wittigis had a brainstorm a couple of weeks ago. He shut himself up in Ravenna, where the Greeks couldn't get him, and had himself proclaimed king. We've cleaned up the Greeks, and are on our way to settle with Wittigis now. You boys will be a help." All of which was rather unjust to Wittigis.

Padway wondered whether there'd be anything left of his character after a few years in this mendacious atmosphere. The two Gothic generals accepted his statement without comment. Padway decided quickly that neither of them could be called exactly bright.

They marched into Ravenna at noon two days later. The mists were so thick about the northern causeway that a man had to precede the leading horsemen on foot to keep them from blundering off into the marsh.

There was some alarm in Ravenna when the force appeared in the fog. Padway and Thiudahad prudently kept quiet as Asinar and Grippas identified themselves. As a result, most of the huge force was in the city before anybody noticed the little gray man with Padway. Immediately there were shouts and runnings to and fro.

Presently a Goth in a rich red cloak dashed out to the head of the column. He shouted: "What the devil's going on here? Have you captured Thiudahad, or is it the other way around?"

Asinar and Grippas sat their horses and muttered: "Uh . . . well . . . that is—"

Padway spurred up front and asked the Goth: "Who are you, my dear sir?"

"If it's any of your business, I'm Unilas Wiljarith's son, general of our lord Wittigis, King of the Goths and Italians. Now who are *you?*"

Padway grinned and replied smoothly: "I'm delighted to know you, General Unilas. I'm Martin Paduei, quaestor to old lord Thiudahad, King of the Goths and Italians. Now that we know each other—"

"But, you fool, there isn't any King Thiudahad! He was deposed! We've got a new king! Or hadn't you heard about it?"

"Oh, I've heard lots of things. But, my excellent Unilas, before you make any more rude remarks, consider that we—that is to say King Thiudahad—have over sixty thousand troops in Ravenna, whereas you have about twelve thousand. You don't want any necessary unpleasantness, do you?"

"Why, you impudent . . . you . . . uh . . . did you say *sixty* thousand?"

"Maybe seventy; I haven't counted them."

"Oh. That's different."

"I thought you'd see it that way."

"What are you going to do?"

"Well, if you can tell me where *General* Wittigis is, I thought we might pay him a call."

"He's getting married today. I think he ought to be on his way to St. Vitalis' Church about now."

"You mean he hasn't married Mathaswentha yet?"

"No. There was some delay in getting his divorce."

"Quick, how do we get to St. Vitalis' Church?"

Padway hadn't hoped to be in time to interfere with Wittigis' attempt to engraft himself on the Amal family tree by his forcible marriage with the late Queen Amalaswentha's daughter. But this was too good an opportunity to let it slip.

Unilas pointed out a dome flanked by two towers. Padway shouted to his guard and kicked his horse into a canter. The five hundred men galloped after him, spattering unfortunate pedestrians with mud. They thundered across a bridge over one of Ravenna's canals, the stench from which fully lived up to its reputation, and reached the door of St. Vitalis' Church.

There were a score of guards at the door, through which organ music wafted faintly. The guards brought their spears up to "poise."

Padway reined in and turned to the commander of his guard, a Macedonian named Achilleus. "Cover them," he snapped.

There was a quick, concerted movement among the cuirassiers, who had been sorting themselves into a semicircle in front of the church door. The next instant the guards were looking at a hundred stiff Byzantine bows drawn to the cheek. *"Nu,"* said Padway in Gothic, "if you boys will put your stickers down and your hands up, we have an appointment—oh, that's better. Much better." He slid off his horse. "Achilleus, give me a troop. Then surround the church, and keep those inside in and those outside out until I finish with Wittigis."

He marched into St. Vitalis' Church with a hundred cuirassiers at his heels. The organ music died with a wail, and people turned to stare at him. It took his eyes a few seconds to become accustomed to the gloom.

In the center of the huge octagon towered a pickle-faced Arian bishop, before whom stood three people. One was a big man in a long, rich robe, a crown on his dark, graying hair: King Wittigis. Another was a tallish girl with a strawberries-and-cream complexion and her hair in thick golden braids: the princess Mathaswentha. The third was an ordinary Gothic soldier, somewhat cleaned up, who stood beside the bride and held her arm behind her back. The audience was a handful of Gothic nobles and their ladies.

Padway walked purposefully down the aisle, people squirmed and rustled in their seats and murmured: "The Greeks! The Greeks are in Ravenna!"

The bishop addressed Padway: "Young man, what is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"You'll soon learn, my lord bishop. Since when has the Arian faith countenanced the taking of a woman to wife against her will?"

"What's that? Who is being taken against her will? What business is this wedding of yours? Who are you, young man, who dares to interrupt—"

Padway laughed his most irritating laugh. "One question at a time, please. I am Martinus Paduei, quaestor to King Thiudahad. Ravenna is in our hands, and prudent persons will comport themselves accordingly. As for the wedding, it isn't normally necessary to assign a man to twist the bride's arm to make sure she gives the right answers. You do not want to marry this man, do you, my lady?"

Mathaswentha jerked her arm away from the soldier, who had been relaxing his grip. She made a fist and punched him in the nose with enough force to rock his head back on its hinges. Then she swung at Wittigis, who dodged back. "You beast!" she cried. "I'll claw your eyes—"

The bishop grabbed her arm. "Calm yourself, my daughter! Please! This is a house of God—"

King Wittigis had been blinking at Padway, gradually soaking in the news. Mathaswentha's attack had shocked him out of his lethargy. He growled: "You're trying to tell me that the miserable pen pusher, Thiudahad, has taken the town? *My* town?"

"That, my lord, is true. I fear you'll have to abandon your idea of becoming an Amaling and ruling the Goths. But we'll—"

Wittigis' face had been turning darker and darker red. Now he burst into a shocking roar. "You swine!" he yelled. "You think I'll hand over my crown and my bride peaceably? By Jesus I'll see you in the hottest hell first!" As he spoke he whipped out his sword and ran heavily at Padway, his gold-embroidered robe flapping.

Padway was not entirely taken by surprise. He got his own sword out and parried Wittigis' terrific downward cut easily enough, though the force of the blow almost disarmed him. Then he found himself chest to chest with the Goth, hugging the barrel torso and chewing Wittigis' pepper-and-salt beard. He tried to shout up to his men, but it was like trying to talk with a mouth full of shredded wheat.

He spat out, it seemed, half a bale of the stuff. "Grab . . . *glfth* . . . *pffth* . . . grab him, boys! Don't hurt him!"

That was easier said than done. Wittigis struggled like a captive gorilla, even when five men were hanging onto him, and he bellowed and foamed all the while. The Gothic gentlemen were standing, some with hands on their sword hilts, but in a hopeless minority None seemed anxious to die for his king just then. Wittigis began to sob between roars.

"Tie him up until he cools off," said Padway unfeelingly. "My lord bishop, may I trouble you for pen and paper?"

The bishop looked bleakly at Padway, and called a sexton, who led Padway to a room off the vestibule. Here he sat down and wrote:

> Martinus Paduei to Thomasus the Syrian. Greetings:
>
> My dear Thomasus: I am sending you with this letter the person of Wittigis, former King of the Goths and Italians. His escort has orders to deliver him to your house secretly, so forgive me for any alarm they cause you if they get you out of bed.
>
> As I remember, we have a telegraph tower under construction on the Flaminian Way near Helvillum. Please arrange to have a chamber constructed in the earth underneath this tower and fitted up as an apartment forthwith. Incarcerate Wittigis therein with an adequate guard. Have him made as comfortable as possible, as I judge him a man of moody temperament, and I do not wish him to harm himself.
>
> The utmost secrecy is to be observed at all times. That should not be too difficult, as this tower is in a wild stretch of country. It would be advisable to have Wittigis delivered to the tower by guards other than those who take him to Rome, and to have him guarded by men who speak neither Latin nor Gothic. They shall release their prisoner only on my order, delivered either in person or via the telegraph, or without orders in the event of my imprisonment or death.
>
> With best regards,
> MARTINUS PADUEI.

Padway said to Wittigis: "I'm sorry to have to treat you so roughly, my lord. I would not have interfered if I hadn't known it was necessary to save Italy."

Wittigis had relapsed into morose taciturnity. He glared silently.

Padway continued: "I'm really doing you a favor, you know. If Thiudahad got hold of you, you would die—slowly."

There was still no reply.

"Oh, well, take him away boys. Wrap him up so the people won't recognize him, and use the back streets."

Thiudahad peered moistly at Padway. "Marvelous, marvelous, my dear Martinus. The Royal Council accepted the inevitable. The only trouble is that the evil usurper had my crown altered to fit his big head; I'll have to alter it back. Now I can devote my time to some real scholarly research. Let's see—

there was something else I wanted to ask you. Oh, yes, what did you do with Wittigis?"

Padway put on a benign smile. "He's out of your reach, my lord king."

"You mean you killed him? Now, that's too bad! Most inconsiderate of you, Martinus. I told you I'd promised myself a nice long session with him in the torture chambers—"

"No, he's alive. Very much so."

"What? What? Then produce him, at once!"

Padway shook his head. "He's where you'll never find him. You see, I figured it would be foolish to waste a good spare king. If anything happened to you, I might need one in a hurry."

"You're insubordinate, young man! I won't stand for it! You'll do as your king orders you, or else—"

Padway grinned, shaking his head. "No, my lord. Nobody shall hurt Wittigis. And you'd better not get rough with me, either. His guards have orders to release him if anything happens to me. He doesn't like you any better than you like him. You can figure the rest out for yourself."

"You devil!" spat the king venomously. "Why, oh, why did I ever let you save my life? I haven't had a moment's peace since. You might have a little consideration for an old man," he whined. "Let's see, what was I talking about?"

"Perhaps," said Padway, "about the new book we're going to get out in our joint names. It has a perfectly splendid theory, about the mutual attraction of masses. Accounts for the movements of the heavenly bodies, and all sorts of things. It's called the law of gravitation."

"Really? Now, that's most interesting, Martinus, most interesting. It would spread my fame as a philosopher to the ends of the earth, wouldn't it?"

Padway asked Unilas if Wittigis' nephew Urias was in Ravenna. Unilas said yes, and sent a man to hunt him up.

Urias was big and dark like his uncle. He arrived scowling defiance. "Well, Mysterious Martinus, now that you've overthrown my uncle by trickery, what are you going to do with me?"

"Not a thing," said Padway. "Unless you force me to."

"Aren't you having a purge of my uncle's family?"

"No. I'm not even purging your uncle. In strict confidence, I'm hiding Wittigis to keep Thiudahad from harming him."

"Really? Can I believe that?"

"Sure I'll even get a letter from him, testifying to the good treatment he's getting."

"Letters can be produced by torture."

"Not with Wittigis. For all your uncle's faults, I think you will agree that he's a stubborn chap."

Urias relaxed visibly. "That's something. Yes, if that's true, perhaps you have some decency, after all."

"Now to get down to business. How do you feel about working for us—that is, nominally for Thiudahad but actually for me?"

Urias stiffened. "Out of the question. I'm resigning my commission, of course. I won't take any action disloyal to my uncle."

"I'm sorry to hear that. I need a good man to command the reoccupation of Dalmatia."

Urias shook his head stubbornly. "It's a question of loyalty. I've never gone back on my plighted word yet."

Padway sighed. "You're as bad as Belisarius. The few trustworthy and able men in the world won't work with me because of previous obligations. So I have to struggle along with crooks and dimwits."

Darkness seemed to want to fall by mere inertia—

CHAPTER XII

Little by little Ravenna's nonce population flowed away, like trickles of water from a wet sponge on a tile floor. A big trickle flowed north, as fifty thousand Goths marched back toward Dalmatia. Padway prayed that Asinar, who seemed to have a little more glimmering of intelligence than Grippas, would not have another brainstorm and come rushing back to Italy before he'd accomplished anything.

Padway did not dare leave Italy long enough to take command of the campaign himself. He did what he could by sending some of his personal guard along to teach the Goths horse-archery tactics. Asinar might decide to ignore this newfangled nonsense as soon as he was out of sight. Or the cuirassiers might desert to Count Constantianus. Or—but there was no point in anticipating calamities.

Padway finally found time to pay his respects to Mathaswentha. He told himself that he was merely being polite and making a useful contact. But he knew that actually he didn't want to leave Ravenna without another look at the luscious wench.

The Gothic princess received him graciously. She spoke excellent Latin, in a rich contralto vibrant with good health. "I thank you, excellent Martinus, for saving me from that beast. I shall never be able to repay you properly."

They walked into her living room. Padway found that it was no effort at all to keep in step with her. But then; she was almost as tall as he was.

"It was very little, my lady," he said. "We just happened to arrive at an opportune time."

"Don't deprecate yourself, Martinus. I know a lot about you. It takes a real man to accomplish all you have. Especially when one considers that you arrived in Italy, a stranger, only a little over a year ago."

"I do what I must, princess. It may seem impressive to others, but to me it's more as if I had been forced into each action by circumstances, regardless of my intentions."

"A fatalistic doctrine, Martinus. I could almost believe that you're a pagan. Not that I'd mind."

Padway laughed. "Hardly. I understand that you can still find pagans if you hunt around the Italian hills."

"No doubt. I should like to visit some of the little villages some day. With a good guide, of course."

"I ought to be a pretty good guide, after the amount of running around I've done in the last couple of months."

'Would you take me? Be careful; I'll hold you to it, you know."

"That doesn't worry me any, princess. But it would have to be some day. At the present rate, God knows when I'll get time for anything but war and politics, neither of which is my proper trade."

"What is, then?"

"I was a gatherer of facts; a kind of historian of periods that had no history. I suppose you could call me a historical philosopher."

"You're a fascinating person, Martinus. I can see why they call you Mysterious. But if you don't like war and politics, why do you engage in them?"

"That would be hard to explain, my lady. In the course of my work in my own country, I had occasion to study the rise and fall of many civilizations. In looking around me here, I see many symptoms of a fall."

"Really? That's a strange thing to say. Of course, my own people, and barbarians like the Franks, have occupied most of the Western Empire. But they're not a danger to civilization. They protect it from the real wild men like the Bulgarian Huns and the Slavs. I can't think of a time when our western culture was more secure."

"You're entitled to your opinion, my lady," said Padway. "I merely put together such facts as I have, and draw what conclusions I can. Facts such as the decline in the population of Italy, despite the Gothic immigrations. And such things as the volume of shipping. "

"Shipping? I never thought of measuring civilization *that* way. But in any event, that doesn't answer my question."

"Triggws, to use one of your own Gothic words. Well, I want to prevent the darkness of barbarism from falling over western Europe. It sounds conceited, the idea that one man could do anything like that. But I can try. One of the weaknesses of our present setup is slow communication. So I promote the telegraph company. And because my backers are Roman patricians suspected of Grecophile leanings, I find myself in politics up to my neck. One thing leads to another, until today I'm practically running Italy."

Mathaswentha looked thoughtful. "I suppose the trouble with slow com-

munication is that a general can revolt or an invader overrun the border weeks before the central government hears about it."

"Right. I can see you're your mother's daughter. If I wanted to patronize you, I should say that you had a man's mind."

She smiled. "On the contrary, I should be very much pleased. At least, if you mean a man like yourself. Most of the men around here—*bah!* Squalling infants, without one idea among them. When I marry, it must be to a man—shall we say both of thought and action?"

Padway met her eyes, and was aware that his heart had stepped up several beats per minute. "I hope you find him, princess."

"I may yet." She sat up straight and looked at him directly, almost defiantly, quite unconcerned with the inner confusion she was causing him. He noticed that sitting up straight didn't make her look any less desirable. On the contrary.

She continued: "That's one reason I'm so grateful to you for saving me from the beast. Of all these thick-headed ninnies, he had the thickest head. What became of him, by the way? Don't pretend innocence, Martinus. Everybody knows your guards took him into the vestibule of the church, and then he apparently vanished."

"He's safe, I hope, both from our point of view and his."

"You mean you hid him? Death would have been safer yet."

"I had reasons for not wanting him killed."

"You did? I give you fair warning that if he ever falls into my hands, I shall not have such reasons."

"Aren't you a bit hard on poor old Wittigis? He was merely trying, in his own muddle-headed way, to defend the kingdom."

"Perhaps. But after that performance in the church, I hate him." The gray eyes were cold as ice. "And when I hate, I don't do it half way."

"So I see," said Padway dryly, jarred out of the pink fog, for the moment. But then Mathaswentha smiled again, all curvesome and desirable woman. "You'll stay to dinner, of course? There will only be a few people, and they'll leave early."

"Why—" There were piles of work to be done that evening. And he needed to catch up on his sleep—a chronic condition with him. "Thank you, my lady, I shall be delighted."

By the third visit to Mathaswentha, Padway was saying to himself: There's a real woman. Ravishing good looks, forceful character, keen brain. The man who gets her will have one in a million. Why shouldn't I be the one? She seems to like me. With her to back me up, there's nothing I couldn't accomplish. Of course, she *is* a bit bloodthirsty. You wouldn't exactly describe her as a "sweet" girl. But that's the fault of the times, not of her. She'll settle down when she has a man of her own to do her fighting for her.

In other words, Padway was as thoroughly in love as such a rational and prudent man can ever be.

But how did one go about marrying a Gothic princess? You certainly didn't take her out in an automobile and kiss her lipstick off by way of a starter. Nor did you begin by knowing her in high school, the way he had known Betty. She was an orphan, so you couldn't approach her old man. He supposed that the only thing to do was to bring the subject up a little at a time and see how she reacted.

He asked: "Mathaswentha, my dear, when you spoke of the kind of man you'd like to marry, did you have any other specifications in mind?"

She smiled at him, whereat the room swam slightly. "Curious, Martinus? I didn't have many, aside from those I mentioned. Of course he shouldn't be *too* much older than I, as Wittigis was."

"You wouldn't mind if he wasn't much taller than you?"

"No, unless he were a mere shrimp."

"You haven't any objections to large noses?"

She laughed a rich, throaty laugh. "Martinus, you *are* the funniest man. I suppose it's that you and I are different. I go directly for what I want, whether it's love, or revenge, or anything else."

"What do I do?"

"You walk all around it, and peer at it from every angle, and spend a week figuring out whether you want it badly enough to risk taking it." She added quickly. "Don't think I mind. I like you for it."

"I'm glad of that. But about noses—"

"Of *course* I don't mind! I think yours, for instance, is aristocratic-looking. Nor do I mind little red beards or wavy brown hair or any of the other features of an amazing young man named Martinus Paduei. That's what you were getting at, wasn't it?"

Padway knew a great relief. This marvelous woman went out of her way to ease your difficulties! "As a matter of fact it was, princess."

"You needn't be so frightfully respectful, Martinus. Anybody would know you are a foreigner, the way you meticulously use all the proper titles and epithets."

Padway grinned. "I don't like to take chances, as you know. Well, you see, now, it's this way. I—uh—was wondering—uh—if you don't dislike these—uh—characteristics, whether you couldn't learn to—uh—uh—"

"You don't by any chance mean love, do you?"

"Yes!" said Padway loudly.

"With practice I might."

"Whew!" said Padway mopping his forehead.

"I'd need teaching," said Mathaswentha. "I've lived a sheltered life, and know little of the world."

"I looked up the law," said Padway quickly, "and while there's an ordinance against marriage of Goths to Italians, there's nothing about Americans. So—"

Mathaswentha interrupted: "I could hear you better, dear Martinus, if you came closer."

Padway went over and sat down beside her. He began again: "The Edicts of Theoderik—"

She said softly: "I know the laws, Martinus. That is not what I need instruction in."

Padway suppressed his tendency to talk frantically of impersonal matters to cover emotional turmoil. He said, "My love, your first lesson will be this." He kissed her hand.

Her eyes were half closed, her mouth slightly open, and her breath was quick and shallow. She whispered: "Do the Americans, then, pratice the art of kissing as we do?"

He gathered her in and applied the second lesson. Mathaswentha opened her eyes, blinked, and shook her head. "That was a foolish question, my dear Martinus. The Americans are way ahead of us. What ideas you put in an innocent girl's head!" She laughed joyfully. Padway laughed too.

Padway said: 'You've made me very happy, princess."

"You've made me happy, too, my prince. I thought I should never find anyone like you." She swayed into his arms again.

Mathaswentha sat up and straightened her hair. She said in a brisk, businesslike manner: "There are a lot of questions to settle before we decide anything finally. Wittigis, for instance."

"What about him?" Padway's happiness suddenly wasn't quite so complete.

"He'll have to be killed, naturally."

"Oh?"

"Don't 'oh' me, my dear. I warned you that I am no halfhearted hater. And Thiudahad, too."

"Why him?"

She straightened up, frowning. "He murdered my mother, didn't he? What more reason do you want? And eventually you will want to become king yourself—"

"No, I won't," said Padway.

"Not want to be king? Why, Martinus!"

"Not for me, my dear. Anyhow, I'm not an Amaling."

"As my husband you will be considered one."

"I still don't want—"

"Now, darling, you just *think* you don't. You will change your mind. While we are about it, there is that former serving-wench of yours, Julia I think her name is—"

"What about—what do you know about her?"

"Enough. We women hear everything sooner or later."

The little cold spot in Padway's stomach spread and spread. "But—but—"

"Now, Martinus, it's a small favor that your betrothed is asking. And don't think that a person like me would be jealous of a mere house-servant. But it would be a humiliation to me if she were living after our marriage. It needn't be a painful death—some quick poison . . ."

Padway's face turned as blank as that of a renting agent at the mention of cockroaches. His mind was whirling. There seemed to be no end to Mathaswentha's lethal little plans. His underwear was damp with cold sweat.

He knew now that he was not in the least in love with Mathaswentha. Let some roaring Goth have this fierce blond Valkyr! He preferred a girl with less direct ideas of getting what she wanted. And no insurance man would give a policy on a member of the Amal clan, considering their dark and bloody past.

"Well?" said Mathaswentha.

He was thinking, frantically, how to get out of this fix.

"I just remembered," he said slowly, "I have a wife back in America."

"Oh. A fine time to think of *that,*" she answered coldly.

"I haven't seen her for a long time."

"Well, then, there's a divorce, isn't there?"

"Not in my religion. We Congregationalists believe there's a special compartment in hell for frying divorced persons."

"Martinus!" Her eyes were a pair of gray blowtorches. "You're trying to back out. No man shall ever do that to me and live to tell—"

"No, no, not at all!" cried Padway. "Nothing of the sort, my dear! I'd wade through rivers of blood to reach your side."

"*Hmmm.* A very pretty speech, Martinus Paduei. Do you use it on all the girls?"

"I mean it. I'm mad about you."

"Then why don't you act as if—"

"I'm devoted to you. It was stupid of me not to think of this obstacle sooner."

"Do you really love me?" She softened a little.

"Of course I do! I've never known anyone like you." The last sentence was truthful. "But facts are facts."

Mathaswentha rubbed her forehead, obviously struggling with conflicting emotions. She asked: "If you haven't seen her for so long, how do you know she's alive?"

"I don't. But I don't know that she isn't. You know how strict your laws are about bigamy. Edicts of Athalarik, Paragraph Six. I looked it up."

"You would," she said with some bitterness. "Does anyone else in Italy know about this American bitch of yours?"

"N-no but—"

"Then aren't you being a bit silly, Martinus? What difference does it make, if she's on the other side of the earth?"

"Religion."

"Oh, the devil flyaway with the priests! I'll handle the Arians when we're in power. For the Catholics, you have influence with the Bishop of Bologna, I hear, and that means with the Pope."

"I don't mean the churches. I mean my personal convictions."

"A practical fellow like you? Nonsense. You're using them as an excuse—"

Padway, seeing the fires about to flare up again, interrupted: "Now, Mathaswentha, you don't want to start a religious argument, do you? You let my creed alone and I'll say nothing against yours. Oh, I just thought of a solution."

"What?"

"I'll send a messenger to America to find out whether my wife is still alive."

"How long will that take?"

"Weeks. Months, perhaps. If you really love me, you won't mind waiting."

"I'd wait," she said without enthusiasm. She looked up sharply. "Suppose your messenger finds the woman alive?"

"We'll worry about that when the time comes."

"Oh, no, we won't. We'll settle this now."

"Look, darling, don't you trust your future husband? Then—"

"Don't evade, Martinus. You're as slippery as a Byzantine lawyer."

"In that case, I suppose I'd take a chance on my immortal—"

"Oh, but, Martinus!" she cried cheerfully. "How stupid of me not to see the answer before! You shall instruct your messenger, if he finds her alive, to poison her! Such things can always be managed discreetly."

"That *is* an idea."

"It's the obvious idea! I'd prefer it to a mere divorce anyway, for the sake of my good name. Now all our worries are over." She hugged him with disconcerting violence.

"I suppose they are," said Padway with an utter lack of conviction. "Let's continue our lessons, dearest." He kissed her again, trying for a record this time.

She smiled up at him and sighed happily. "You shall never kiss anyone else, my love."

"I wouldn't think of it, princess."

"You'd better not," she said. "You will forgive me, dear boy, for getting a little upset just now. I am but an innocent young girl, with no knowledge of the world and no will of her own."

At least, thought Padway, he was not the only liar present. He stood up and pulled her to her feet. "I must go now. I'll send the messenger off the first thing. And tomorrow I leave for Rome."

"Oh, Martinus! You surely don't have to go. You just *think* you do—"

"No, really. State business, you know. I'll think of you all the way." He kissed her again. "Be brave, my dear. Smile, now."

She smiled a trifle tearfully and squeezed the breath out of him.

When Padway got back to his quarters, he hauled his orderly, an Armenian cuirassier, out of bed. "Put on your right boot," he ordered.

The man rubbed his eyes. "My *right* boot? Do I understand you, noble sir?"

"You do. Quickly, now." When the yellow rawhide boot was on, Padway turned his back to the orderly and bent over. He said over his shoulder, "You will give me a swift kick in the fundament, my good Tirdat."

Tirdat's mouth fell open. *"Kick my commander?"*

"You heard me the first time. Go ahead. Now."

Tirdat shuffled uneasily, but at Padway's glare he finally hauled off and let fly. The kick almost sent Padway sprawling. He straightened up, rubbing the spot. "Thank you, Tirdat. You may go back to bed." He started for the wash bowl to brush his teeth with a willow twig. (Must start the manufacture of real toothbrushes one of these days, he thought.) He felt much better.

But Padway did not set off for Rome the next day, or even the day after that. He began to learn that the position of king's quaestor was not just a nice well paying job that let you order people around and do as you pleased. First Wakkis Thurumund's son, a Gothic noble of the Royal Council, came around with a rough draft of a proposed amendment to the law against horse stealing.

He explained: "Wittigis agreed to this revision of the law, but the counter-revolution took place before he had a chance to change it. So, excellent Martinus, it's up to you to discuss the matter with Thiudahad, put the amendment in proper legal language, and *try* to hold the king's attention long enough to get his signature." Wakkis grinned. "And may the saints help you if he's in a stubborn mood, my lad!"

Padway wondered what the devil to do; then he dug up Cassiodorus, who as head of the Italian Civil Service ought to know the ropes. The old scholar proved a great help, though Padway saw fit to edit some of the unnecessarily flowery phrases of the prefect's draft.

He asked Urias around for lunch. Urias came and was friendly enough, though still somewhat bitter about the treatment of his uncle Wittigis. Padway liked him. He thought, I can't hold out on Mathaswentha indefinitely. And I shan't dare take up with another girl while she looks on me as a suitor. But this fellow is big and good-looking, and he seems intelligent. If I could engineer a match . . .

He asked Urias whether he was married. Urias raised eyebrows. "No. Why?"

"I just wondered. What do you intend to do with yourself now?"

"I don't know. Go rusticate on my land in Picenum, I suppose. It'll be a dull life, after the soldiering I've been doing the past few years."

Padway asked casually: "Have you ever met the Princess Mathaswentha?"

"Not formally. I arrived in Ravenna only a few days ago for the wedding. I saw her in the church, of course, when you barged in. She's attractive, isn't she?"

"Quite so. She's a person worth knowing. If you like, I'll try to arrange a meeting."

Padway, as soon as Urias had gone, rushed around to Mathaswentha's house. He contrived to make his arrival look as unpremeditated as possible. He started to explain: "I've been delayed, my dear. I may not get off to Rome *ubb*—" Mathaswentha had slid her arms around his neck and stopped his little speech in the most effective manner. Padway didn't dare seem tepid, but that wasn't at all difficult. The only trouble was that it made coherent thought impossible at a time when he wanted all his craft. And the passionate wench seemed satisfied to stand in the vestibule and kiss him all afternoon.

She finally said: "Now, what were you saying, my dearest?"

Padway finished his statement. "So I thought I'd drop in for a moment." He laughed. "It's just as well I'm going to Rome; I shall never get any work done as long as I'm in the city with you. Do you know Wittigis' nephew Urias by the way?"

"No. And I'm not sure I want to. When we kill Wittigis, we shall naturally have to consider killing his nephews, too. I have a silly prejudice against murdering people I know socially."

"Oh, my dear, I think that's a mistake. He's a splendid young man; you'd really like him. He's one Goth with both brains and character; probably the only one."

"Well, I don't know—"

"And I need him in my business, only he's got scruples against working for me. I thought maybe you could work your flashing smile on him, to soften him up a bit."

"If you think I could really help you, perhaps—"

Thus the Gothic princess had Padway and Urias for company at dinner that night. Mathaswentha was pretty cool to Urias at first. But they drank a good deal of wine, and she unbent. Urias was good company. Presently they were all laughing uproariously at his imitation of a drunken Hun, and at Padway's hastily translated off-color stories. Padway taught the other two a Greek popular song that Tirdat, his orderly, had brought from Constantinople. If Padway hadn't been conscious of a small gnawing anxiety for the success of his various plots, he'd have said he was having the best time of his life.

CHAPTER XIII

Back in Rome, Padway went to see his captive Imperial generals. They were comfortably housed and seemed well enough pleased with their situation, though Belisarius was moody and abstracted. Enforced inactivity didn't sit well with the former commander-in-chief.

Padway asked him: "As you can learn easily enough, we shall soon have a powerful state here. Have you changed your mind about joining us?"

"No, my lord quaestor, I have not. An oath is an oath. "

"Have you ever broken an oath in your life?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"If for any reason you should swear an oath to me, I suppose, you'd consider yourself as firmly bound by it as by the others, wouldn't you?"

"Naturally. But that's a ridiculous supposition."

"Perhaps. How would it be if I offered you parole and transportation back to Constantinople, on condition that you would never again bear arms against the kingdom of the Goths and Italians?"

"You're a crafty and resourceful man, Martinus. I thank you for the offer, but I couldn't square it with my oath to Justinian. Therefore I must decline."

Padway repeated his offer to the other generals. Constantianus, Perianus, and Bessas accepted at once. Padway's reasoning was as follows: these three were just fair-to-middling commanders. Justinian could get plenty more of this kind, so there was not much point in keeping them. Of course they'd violate their oaths as soon as they were out of his reach. But Belisarius was a real military genius; he mustn't be allowed to fight against the kingdom again. Either he'd have to come over, or give his parole—which he alone would keep—or be kept in detention.

On the other hand, Justinian's clever but slightly warped mind was unrea-

sonably jealous of Belisarius' success and his somewhat stuffy virtue. When he learned that Belisarius had stayed behind in Rome rather than give a parole that he'd be expected to break, the emperor *might* be sufficiently annoyed to do something interesting.

Padway wrote:

> King Thiudahad to the Emperor Justinian, Greetings.
>
> Your serene highness: We send you with this letter the persons of your generals Constantianus, Perianus, and Bessas, under parole not to bear arms against us again. A similar parole was offered your general Belisarius, but he declined to accept it on grounds of his personal honor.
>
> As continuation of this war seems unlikely to achieve any constructive result, we take the opportunity of stating the terms that we should consider reasonable for the establishment of enduring peace between us.
>
> 1. Imperial troops shall evacuate Sicily and Dalmatia forthwith.
>
> 2. An indemnity of one hundred thousand solidi in gold shall be paid us for damages done by your invading armies.
>
> 3. We shall agree never again to make war, one upon the other, without mutual consultation in advance. Details can be settled in due course.
>
> 4. We shall agree not to assist any third parties, by men, money, or munitions, which hereafter shall make war upon either of us.
>
> 5. We shall agree upon a commercial treaty to facilitate the exchange of goods between our respective realms.
>
> This is of course a very rough outline, details of which would have to be settled by conference between our representatives. We think you will agree that these terms, or others very similar in intent, are the least that we could reasonably ask under the circumstances.
>
> We shall anticipate the gracious favor of a reply at your serenity's earliest convenience.
>
> by MARTINUS PADUEI, Quaestor.

When he saw who his visitor was, Thomasus got up with a grunt and waddled toward him, good eye sparkling and hand outstretched. "Martinus! It's good to see you again. How does it feel to be important?"

"Wearisome," said Padway, shaking hands vigorously. "What's the news?"

"News? News? Listen to that! He's been making most of the news in Italy

for the past two months, and he wants to know what the news is!"

"I mean about our little bird in a cage."

"Huh? Oh, you mean"—Thomasus looked around cautiously—"ex-King Wittigis? He was doing fine at last reports, though nobody's been able to get a civil word out of him. Listen, Martinus, of all the lousy tricks I ever heard of, springing the job of hiding him on me without warning was the worst. I'm sure God agrees with me, too. Those soldiers dragged me out of bed, and then I had them and their prisoner around the house for several days."

"I'm sorry, Thomasus. But you were the only man in Rome I felt I could trust absolutely."

"Oh, well, if you put it that way. But Wittigis was the worst grouch I ever saw. Nothing suited him."

"How's the telegraph company coming?"

"That's another thing. The Naples line is working regularly. But the lines to Ravenna and Florence won't be finished for a month, and until they are there's no chance of a profit. *And* the minority stockholders have discovered that they're a minority. You should have heard them howl! They're after your blood. At first Count Honorius was with them. He threatened to jail Vardan and Ebenezer and me if we didn't sell him—give him, practically—a controlling interest. But we learned he needed money worse than he needed the stock, and bought his from him. So the other patricians have to be satisfied with snubbing us when they pass us in the street."

"I'm going to start another paper as soon as I get time," said Padway. "There'll be two, one in Rome and one in Florence."

"Why one in Florence?"

"That's where our new capital's going to be."

"What?"

"Yes. It's better located than Rome with regard to roads and such, and it has a much better climate than Ravenna. In fact I can't think of a place that *hasn't* a better climate than Ravenna, hell included. I sold the idea to Cassiodorus, and between us we got Thiudahad to agree to move the administrative offices thither. If Thiudahad wants to hold court in the City of Fogs, Bogs and Frogs, that's his lookout. I'll be just as glad not to have him in my hair."

"In your hair? Oh, ho-ho-ho, you *are* the funniest fellow, Martinus. I wish I could say things the way you do. But all this activity takes my breath away. What else of revolutionary nature are you planning?"

"I'm going to try to start a school. We have a flock of teachers on the public payroll now, but all they know is grammar and rhetoric. I'm going to have things taught that really matter: mathematics, and the sciences, and medicine. I see where I shall have to write all the textbooks myself."

"Just one question, Martinus. When do you find time to sleep?"

Padway grinned wanly. "Mostly I don't. But if I can ever get out of all this political and military activity, I hope to catch up. I don't really like it, but it's a necessary means to an end. The end is things like the telegraph and the presses. My politicking and soldiering may not make any difference a hundred years from now, but the other things will, I hope."

Padway started to go, then said: "Is Julia from Apulia still working for Ebenezer the Jew?"

"The last I heard she was. Why? Do you want her back?"

"God forbid. She's got to disappear from Rome."

"Why?"

"For her own safety. I can't tell you about it yet."

"But I thought you disliked her—"

"That doesn't mean I want her murdered. And my own hide may be in danger, too, unless we get her out of town."

"Oh, God, why didst Thou let me get involved with a politician? I don't know, Martinus; she's a free citizen . . ."

"How about your cousin in Naples, Antiochus? I'd make it worth his while to hire her at higher wages."

"Well, I—"

"Have her go to work for Antiochus under another name. Fix it up quietly, old man. If the news leaks out, we'll all be in the soup."

"Soup? Ha, ha. Very funny. I'll do what I can. Now, about that old six-month note of yours . . ."

Oh, dear, thought Padway, now it would begin again. Thomasus was easy enough to get on with most of the time. But he could not or would not conduct the simplest financial transactions without three hours of frantic haggling. Perhaps he enjoyed it. Padway did not.

Jogging along the road to Florence again, Padway regretted that he had not seen Dorothea while he was in Rome. He had not dared. That was one more reason for getting Mathaswentha married off quickly. Dorothea would be a much more suitable if less spectacular girl for *him*. Not that he was in love with her. Though he probably would be if he saw enough of her, he thought somewhat cold-bloodedly.

He had too much else to do now. If he could only get time to relax, to catch up on his sleep, to investigate the things that really interested him, to have a little fun! He liked fun as much as the next man, even if the next man would consider his ideas of fun peculiar.

But his sharp, conscientious mind goaded him on. He knew that his job rested on the unstable foundation of his influence over a senile, unpopular king. As long as Padway pleased them, the Goths would not interfere, as they were accustomed to leaving civil administration in the hands of non-Goths.

But when Thiudahad went? Padway had lots of hay to gather, and there were plenty of thunderheads forming over the barn.

In Florence Padway leased office space in the name of the government, and looked in on his own business. This time there were no irregularities in the accounts. Either there had been no more stealing, or the boys were getting cleverer at concealing it.

Fritharik renewed his plea to be allowed to come along, showing with much pride his jeweled sword, which he had redeemed and sent up from Rome. The sword disappointed Padway, though he did not say so. The gems were merely polished, not cut; faceting had not been invented. But wearing it seemed to add inches to Fritharik's already imposing stature. Padway, somewhat against his better judgment, gave in. He appointed the competent and apparently honest Nerva his general manager.

They were snowed in by a late storm for two days crossing the mountains, and arrived in Ravenna still shivering. The town with its clammy atmosphere and its currents of intrigue depressed him, and the Mathaswentha problem made him nervous. He called on her and made some insincere love to her, and grew all the more anxious to get away. But there was lots of public business to be handled.

Urias announced that he was ready and willing to enter Padway's service. "Mathaswentha talked me into it," he said. "She's a wonderful woman, isn't she?"

"Certainly is," replied Padway. He thought he detected a faintly guilty and furtive air about the straightforward Urias when he spoke of the princess. He smiled to himself. "What I had in mind was setting up a regular military school for the Gothic officers, somewhat on the Byzantine model, with you in charge."

"What? Oh, my word, I hoped you'd have a command on the frontiers for me."

So, thought Padway, he wasn't the only one who disliked Ravenna. "No, my dear sir. This job has to be done for the sake of the kingdom. And I can't do it myself, because the Goths don't think any non-Goth knows anything about soldiering. On the other hand, I need a literate and intelligent man to run the school, and you're the only one in sight."

"But, most excellent Martinus, have you ever tried to teach a Gothic officer anything? I admit that an academy is needed, but—"

"I know. I know. Most of them can't read or write and look down on those who do. That's why I picked *you* for the job. You're respected, and if anybody can put sense into their heads you can." He grinned sympathetically. "I wouldn't have tried so hard to enlist your services if I'd had just an easy, everyday job in mind."

"Thanks. I see you know how to get people to do things for you."

Padway went on to tell Urias some of his ideas. How the Goths' great weakness was the lack of coordination between their mounted lancers and their foot archers; how they needed both reliable foot spearmen and mounted archers to have a well-rounded force. He also described the crossbow, the calthorp, and other military devices.

He said: "It takes five years to make a good longbowman, whereas a recruit can learn to handle a crossbow in a few weeks.

"And if I can get some good steel workers. I'll show you a suit of plate armor that weighs only half as much as one of those scale-mail shirts, but gives better protection and allows fully as much freedom of action." He grinned. "You may expect grumbling at all these newfangled ideas from the more conservative Goths. So you'd better introduce them gradually. And remember, they're your ideas; I won't try to deprive you of the credit for them."

"I understand," grinned Urias. "So if anybody gets hanged for them, it'll be me and not you, like that book on astronomy that came out in Thiudahad's name. It has every churchman from here to Persia sizzling. Poor old Thiudahad gets the blame, but I know you furnished the ideas and put him up to it. Very well, my mysterious friend, I'm game."

Padway himself was surprised when Urias appeared with a very respectable crossbow a few days later. Although the device was simple enough, and he'd furnished an adequate set of drawings for it, he knew from sad experience that to get a sixth-century artisan to make something he'd never seen before, you had to stand over him while he botched six attempts, and then make it yourself.

They spent an afternoon in the great pine wood east of the city shooting at marks. Fritharik proved uncannily accurate, though he affected to despise missile weapons as unworthy of a noble Vandal knight. "But," he said, "it is a remarkably easy thing to aim."

"Yes," replied Padway. "Among my people there's a legend about a crossbowman who offended a government official, and was compelled as punishment to shoot an apple off his son's head. He did so, without harming the boy."

When he got back, Padway learned that he had an appointment the next day with an envoy from the Franks. The envoy, one count Hlodovik, was a tall, lantern-jawed man. Like most Franks he was cleanshaven except for the mustache. He was quite gorgeous in a red silk tunic, gold chains and bracelets, and a jeweled baldric. Padway privately thought that the knobby bare legs below his short pants detracted from his impressiveness. Moreover, Hlodovik was rather obviously suffering from a hangover.

"Mother of God, I'm thirsty," he said. "Will you please do something about that, friend quaestor, before we discuss business?" So Padway had some wine sent in. Hlodovik drank in deep gulps. "Ah! That's better. Now, friend

quaestor, I may say that I don't think I've been very well treated here. The king would only see me for a wink of the eye; said you handle the business. Is that the proper reception for the envoy of King Theudebert, King Hildebert, and King Hlotokar? Not just *one* king, mind you; *three*."

"That's a lot of kings," said Padway, smiling pleasantly. "I am greatly impressed. But you mustn't take offense, my lord count. Our king is an old man, and he finds the press of public business hard to bear."

"So, *hrrmp*. We'll forget about it, then. But we shall not find the reason for my coming hither so easy to forget. Briefly, what became of that hundred and fifty thousand solidi that Wittigis promised my masters, King Theudebert, King Hildebert, and King Hlotokar if they wouldn't attack him while he was involved with the Greeks? Moreover, he ceded Provence to my masters, King Theudebert, King Hildebert, and King Hlotokar. Yet your general Sisigis has not evacuated Provence. When my masters sent a force to occupy it a few weeks ago, they were driven back and several were killed. You should know that the Franks, who are the bravest and proudest people on earth, will never submit to such treatment. What are you going to do about it?"

Padway answered: "You, my lord Hlodovik, should know that the acts of an unsuccessful usurper cannot bind the legitimate government. We intend to hold what we have. So you may warn your masters, King Theudebert, King Hildebert, and King Hlotokar, that there will be no payment and no evacuation."

"Do you really mean that?" Hlodovik seemed astonished. "Don't you know, young man, that the armies of the Franks could sweep the length of Italy, burning and ravaging, any time they wished? My masters, King Theudebert, King Hildebert, and King Hlotokar, are showing great forbearance and humanity by offering you a way out. Think carefully before you invite disaster."

"I have thought, my lord," replied Padway. "And I respectfully suggest that you and your masters do the same. Especially about a little military device that we are introducing. Would you like to see it demonstrated? The parade ground is only a step from here."

Padway had made the proper preparations in advance. When they arrived at the parade ground, Hlodovik weaving slightly all the way, they found Urias, Fritharik, the crossbow, and a supply of bolts. Padway's idea was to have Fritharik take a few demonstration shots at a target. But Fritharik and Urias had other ideas. The latter walked off fifty feet, turned, and placed an apple on his head. Fritharik cocked the crossbow, put a bolt in the groove, and raised the bow to his shoulder.

Padway was frozen speechless with horror. He didn't dare shout at the two idiots to desist for fear of losing face before the Frank. Yet if Urias was killed, he hated to think of the damage that would be done to his plans.

The crossbow snapped. There was a short *splush*, and fragments of apple

flew about. Urias, grinning, picked pieces of apple out of his hair and walked back.

"Do you find the demonstration impressive, my lord?" Padway asked.

"Yes, quite," said Hlodovik. "Let's see that device. *Hm-m-m.* Of course, the brave Franks don't believe that any battle was ever won by a lot of silly arrows. But for hunting, now, this mightn't be bad. How does it work? I see; you pull the string back to here—"

While Fritharik was demonstrating the crossbow, Padway took Urias aside and told him, in a low tone, just what he thought of such a fool stunt. Urias tried to look serious, but couldn't help a faint, small-boy grin. Then there was another snap, and something whizzed between them, not a foot from Padway's face. They jumped and spun around. Hlodovik was holding the crossbow, a foolish look on his long face. "I didn't know it went off so easily," he said.

Fritharik lost his temper. "What are you trying to do, you drunken fool? Kill somebody?"

"What's that? *You* call me a fool? Why—" and the Frank's sword came halfway out of the scabbard.

Fritharik jumped back and grabbed his own sword hilt. Padway and Urias pounced on the two and held their elbows..

"Calm yourself, my lord!" cried Padway. "It's nothing to start a fight over. I'll apologize personally."

The Frank merely got angrier and tried to shake off Padway. "I'll teach that low-born bastard! My honor is insulted!" he shouted. Several Gothic soldiers loafing around the field looked up and trotted over. Hlodovik saw them coming and sheathed his sword, growling: "This is fine treatment for the representative of King Theudebert, King Hildebert, and King Hlotokar. Just wait till they hear of this."

Padway tried to mollify him, but Hlodovik merely grumped, and soon left Ravenna. Padway dispatched a warning to Sisigis to be on the lookout for a Frankish attack. His conscience bothered him a good deal. In a way he thought he ought to have tried to appease the Franks, as he hated the idea of being responsible for war. But he knew that such a fierce and treacherous tribe would only take each concession as a sign of weakness. The time to stop the Franks was the first time.

Then another envoy arrived, this time from the Kutrigurs or Bulgarian Huns. The usher told Padway:

"He's very dignified; doesn't speak any Latin or Gothic, so he uses an interpreter. Says he's a boyar, whatever that is."

"Show him in."

The Bulgaria envoy was a stocky, bowlegged man with high cheek bones, a fiercely upswept mustache, and a nose even bigger than Padway's. He wore a

handsome furlined coat, baggy trousers, and a silk turban wound about his shaven skull, from the rear of which two black pigtails jutted absurdly. Despite the finery, Padway found reason to suspect that the man had never had a bath in his life. The interpreter was a small, nervous Thracian who hovered a pace to the Bulgar's left and rear.

The Bulgar clumped in, bowed stiffly, and did not offer to shake hands. Probably not done among the Huns, thought Padway. He bowed back and indicated a chair. He regretted having done so a moment later, when the Bulgar hiked his boots up on the upholstery and sat cross-legged. Then he began to speak, in a strangely musical tongue which Padway surmised was related to Turkish. He stopped every three or four words for the interpreter to translate. It ran something like this:

Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)
Interpreter: I am the Boyar Karojan—
Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)
Interpreter: The son of Chakir—
Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)
Interpreter. Who was the son of Tardu—
Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)
Interpreter: Envoy of Kardam—
Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)
Interpreter: The son of Kapagan—
Envoy: (Twitter, twitter.)
Interpreter: And Great Khan of the Kutrigurs.

It was distracting to listen to, but not without a certain poetic grandeur. The Bulgar paused impassively at that point. Padway identified himself, and the duo began again:

"My master, the Great Khan—"
"Has received an offer from Justinian, Emperor of the Romans—"
"Of fifty thousand solidi—"
"To refrain from invading his dominions."
"If Thiudahad, King of the Goths—"
"Will make us a better offer—"
"We will ravage Thrace—"
"And leave the Gothic realm alone."
"If he does not—"
"We will take Justinian's gold—"
"And invade the Gothic territories—"
"Of Pannonia and Noricum."

Padway cleared this throat and began his reply, pausing for translation. This method had its advantages, he found. It gave him time to think.

"My master, Thiudahad, King of the Goths and Italians—"
"Authorizes me to say—"
"That he has better use for his money—"
"Than to bribe people not to attack him—"
"And that if the Kutrigurs think—"
"That they can invade our territory—"
"They are welcome to try—"
"But that we cannot guarantee them—"
"A very hospitable reception."
The envoy replied:
"Think man, on what you say."
"For the armies of the Kutrigurs—"
"Cover the Sarmatian steppe like locusts."
"The hoofbeats of their horses—"
"Are a mighty thunder."
"The flight of their arrows—"
"Darkens the sun."
"Where they have passed—"
"Not even grass will grow."
Padway replied:
"Most excellent Karojan—"
"What you say may be true."
"But in spite of their thundering and sundarkening—"
"The last time the Kutrigurs—"
"Assailed our land, a few years ago –"
"They got the pants beat off them."

As this was translated, the Bulgar looked puzzled for a moment. Then he turned red. Padway thought he was angry, but it soon appeared that he was trying to keep from laughing. He said between sputters:

"This time, man, it will be different."
"If any pants are lost—"
"They will be yours."
"How would this be?"
"You pay us sixty thousand—"
"In three installments—"
"Of twenty thousand each?"
But Padway was immovable. The Bulgar finished:
"I shall inform my master—"
"Kardam, the Great Khan of the Kutrigurs—"
"Of your obduracy."
"For a reasonable bribe—"
"I am prepared to tell him—"

"Of the might of the Gothic arms—"

"In terms that shall dissuade him—"

"From his projected invasion."

Padway beat the Bulgar down to half the bribe he originally asked, and they parted on the best of terms. When he went around to his quarters, he found Fritharik trying to wind a towel around his head.

The Vandal looked up with guilty embarrassment. "I was trying, excellent boss, to make a headgear like that of the Hunnish gentleman. It has style."

Padway had long since decided that Thiudahad was a pathological case. But lately the little king was showing more definite signs of mental failure. For instance, when Padway went to see about a new inheritance law, Thiudahad gravely listened to him explain the reasons that the royal Council and Cassiodorus had agreed upon bringing the Gothic law more into line with the Roman.

Then he said: "When are you going to put out another book in my name, Martinus? Your name *is* Martinus, isn't it? Martinus Paduei, Martinus Paduei. Didn't I appoint you prefect or something? Dear me, I can't seem to remember anything. Now, what's this you want to see me about? Always business, business, business. I hate business. Scholarship is more important. Silly state papers. What is it, an order for an execution? I hope you're going to torture the rascal as he deserves. I can't understand this absurd prejudice of yours against torture. The people aren't happy unless they're terrified of their government. Let's see, what was I talking about?"

It was convenient in one way, as Thiudahad didn't bother him much. But it was awkward when the king simply refused to listen to him or to sign anything for a day at a time.

Then he found himself in a hot dispute with the paymaster-general of the Gothic army. The latter refused to put the Imperialist mercenaries whom Padway had captured on the rolls. Padway argued that the men were first-rate soldiers who seemed glad enough to serve the Italo-Gothic state, and that it would cost little more to enlist them than to continue to feed them as prisoners. The paymaster-general replied that national defense had been a prerogative of the Goths since the time of Theoderik, and the men in question were not, with some few exceptions, Goths. Q.E.D.

Each stubbornly maintained his point, so the dispute was carried to Thiudahad. The king listened to the argument with a specious air of wisdom.

Then he sent the paymaster-general away and told Padway: "Lots to be said on both sides, dear sir, lots to be said on both sides: Now, if I decide in your favor, I shall expect a suitable command for my son, Thiudegiskel."

Padway was horrified, though he tried not to show it. "But, my lord king, what military experience has Thiudegiskel had?"

"None; that's just the trouble. Spends all his time drinking and wenching with his wild young friends. He needs a bit of responsibility. Something good, consistent with the dignity of his birth."

Padway argued some more. But he didn't say that he couldn't imagine a worse commander than this self-conceited and arrogant puppy. Thiudahad was obstinate. "After all, Martinus, I'm king, am I not? You can't browbeat me and you can't frighten me with your Wittigis. Heh, heh. I'll have a surprise for you one of these days. What was I talking about? Oh, yes. You do, I think, owe Thiudegiskel something for putting him in that horrid prison camp—"

"But *I* didn't put him in jail—"

"Don't interrupt, Martinus. It isn't considerate. Either you give him a command, or I decide in favor of the other man, what's-his-name. That is my final royal word."

So Padway gave in. Thiudegiskel was put in command of the Gothic forces in Calabria, where, Padway hoped, he wouldn't be able to do much harm. Later he had occasion to remember that hope.

Padway may seem rash to have incorporated such an alien element as the ex-Imperialists in the Italo-Gothic army. But in this age there was no such thing as nationalism in the modem sense. The ties that counted were those of religion and personal loyalty to a commander. Many of the Imperialists were Thracian Goths who had remained in the Balkans at the time of the migration under Theoderik. And some Italian Goths had served the Empire as mercenaries. They mixed with little prejudice on either side.

Then three things happened. General Sisigis sent word of suspicious activity among the Franks.

Padway got a letter from Thomasus, which told of an attempt on the life of ex-King Wittigis. The assassin had inexplicably sneaked into the dugout, where Wittigis, though slightly wounded in the process, had killed him with his bare hands. Nobody knew who the assassin was until Wittigis had declared, with many a bloodcurdling curse, that he recognized the man as an old-time secret agent of Thiudahad. Padway knew what that meant. Thiudahad had discovered Wittigis' whereabouts, and meant to put his rival out of the way. If he succeeded, he'd be prepared to defy Padway's management, or even to heave him out of his office. Or worse.

Finally Padway got a letter from Justinian. It read:

> Flavius Anicius Justinian, Emperor of the Romans, to King Thiudahad, Greetings.
>
> Our serenity's attention has been called to the terms which you propose for termination of the war between us.
>
> We find these terms so absurd and unreasonable that our deigning to reply at all is an act of great condescension on

our part. Our holy endeavor to recover for the Empire the provinces of western Europe, which belonged to our forebears and rightfully belong to us, will be carried through to a victorious conclusion.

As for our former general, Flavius Belisarius, his refusal of parole is an act of gross disloyalty, which we shall fittingly punish in due course. Meanwhile the illustrious Belisarius may consider himself free of all obligations to us. Nay more, we order him to place himself unreservedly under the orders of that infamous heretic and agent of the Evil One who calls himself Martinus of Padua, of whom we have heard.

We are confident that, between the incompetence and cowardice of Belisarius and the heavenly wrath that will attach to those who submit to the unclean touch of the diabolical Martinus, the doom of the Gothic kingdom will not be long delayed.

Padway realized, with a slightly sick feeling, that he had a lot to learn about diplomacy. His defiance of Justinian, and of the Frankish kings, and of the Bulgars, had each been justified, considered by itself. But he shouldn't have committed himself to taking them on all at once.

The thunderheads were piling up fast.

CHAPTER XIV

Padway dashed back to Rome and showed Justinian's letter to Belisarius. He thought he had seldom seen a more unhappy man than the stalwart Thracian.

"I don't know," was all Belisarius would say in answer to his questions. "I shall have to think."

Padway got an interview with Belisarius' wife, Antonina. He got along fine with this slim, vigorous redhead.

She said: "I told him repeatedly that he'd get nothing but ingratitude from Justinian. But you know how he is—reasonable about everything except what concerns his honor. The only thing that would make me hesitate is my friendship with the Empress Theodora. That's not a connection to be thrown over lightly. But after this letter—I'll do what I can, excellent Martinus."

Belisarius, to Padway's unconcealed delight, finally capitulated.

The immediate danger point seemed to be Provence. Padway's rumor-collecting service had gathered a story of another bribe paid by Justinian to the Franks to attack the Goths. So Padway did some shuffling. Asinar, who had sat at Senia for months without the gumption to move against the Imperialists in Spalato, was ordered home, Sisigis, who if no genius was not obviously incompetent, was transferred to command of Asinar's Dalmatian army. And Belisarius was given command of Sisigis' forces in Gaul. Belisarius, before leaving for the North, asked Padway for all the information available about the Franks.

Padway explained: "Brave, treacherous, and stupid. They have nothing but unarmored infantry, who fight in a single deep column. They come whooping along, hurl a volley of throwing-axes and javelins, and close with the sword. If you can stop them by a line of reliable pikemen, or by cavalry charges,

they're suckers for mounted archers. They're very numerous, but such a huge mass of infantry can't forage enough territory to keep themselves fed. So they have to keep moving or starve.

"Moreover, they're so primitive that their soldiers are not paid at all. They're expected to make their living by looting. If you can hold them in one spot long enough, they melt away by desertion. But don't underestimate their numbers and ferocity.

"Try to send agents into Burgundy to rouse the Burgunds against the Franks, who conquered them only a few years ago." He explained that the Burgunds were of East-German origin, like the Goths and Lombards, spoke a language much like theirs, and like them were primarily stock-raisers. Hence they did not get on with the West-German Franks, who were agriculturists when they were not devastating their neighbors' territory.

If there was going to be more war, Padway knew one invention that would settle it definitely in the Italo-Goths' favor. Gunpowder was made of sulfur, charcoal, and saltpeter. Padway had learned that in the sixth grade. The first two were available without question.

He supposed that potassium nitrate could be obtained somewhere as a mineral. But he did not know where, or what it would look like. He could not synthesize it with the equipment at hand, even had he known enough chemistry. But he remembered reading that it occurred at the bottom of manure piles. And he remembered an enormous pile in Nevitta's yard.

He called on Nevitta and asked for permission to dig. He whooped with joy when, sure enough, there were the crystals, looking like maple sugar. Nevitta asked him if he was crazy.

"Sure," grinned Padway. "Didn't you know? I've been that way for years."

His old house on Long Street was a full of activity as ever, despite the move to Florence. It was used as Rome headquarters by the Telegraph Company. Padway was having another press set up. And now the remaining space downstairs became a chemical laboratory. Padway did not know what proportions of the three ingredients made good gunpowder, and the only way to find out was by experiment.

He gave orders, in the government's name, for casting and boring a cannon. The brass foundry that took the job was not co-operative. They had never seen such a contraption and were not sure they could make it. What did he want this tube for, a flower pot?

It took them an interminable time to get the pattern and core made, despite the simplicity of the thing. The first one they delivered looked all right, until Padway examined the breach end closely. The metal here was spongy and pitted. The gun would have blown up the first time it was fired.

The trouble was that it had been cast muzzle down. The solution was to

add a foot to the length of the barrel, cast it muzzle up, and saw off the last foot of flawed brass.

His efforts to produce gunpowder got nowhere. Lots of proportions of the ingredients would bum beautifully when ignited. But they did not explode. He tried all proportions; he varied his method of mixing. Still all he got was a lively sizzle, a big yellow flame, and a stench. He tried packing the stuff into improvised firecrackers. They went *fuff.* They would not go *bang.*

Perhaps he had to touch off a large quantity at once, more tightly compressed yet. He pestered the foundry daily until the second cannon appeared.

Early next morning he and Fritharik and a couple of helpers mounted the cannon on a crude carriage of planks in a vacant space near the Viminal Gate. The helpers had previously piled up a sandhill for a target, thirty feet from the gun.

Padway rammed several pounds of powder down the barrel, and a cast-iron ball after it. He filled the touch-hole.

He said in a low voice: "Fritharik, give me that candle. Now get back everybody. Way over there, and lie down. You too, Fritharik."

"Never!" said Fritharik indignantly. "Desert my lord in the hour of danger? I should say not!"

"All right, if you want to chance being blown to bits. Here goes."

Padway touched the candle flame to the touch-hole. The powder sizzled and sparkled.

The gun went *pfoomp!* The cannonball hopped from the muzzle, thumped to earth a yard away, rolled another yard, and stopped.

Back went the beautiful shiny new gun to Padway's house, to be put in the cellar with the clock.

In the early spring, Urias appeared in Rome. He explained that he'd left the military academy in the hands of subordinates, and was coming down to see about raising a military force of Romans, which had been another of Padway's ideas. But he had an unhappy, hangdog air that made Padway suspect that that wasn't the real reason.

To Padway's leading questions he finally burst out: "Excellent Martinus, you'll simply have to give me a command somewhere away from Ravenna. I can't stand it any longer."

Padway put his arm around Urias' shoulders. "Come on, old man, tell me what is bothering you. Maybe I can help."

Urias looked at the ground. "Uh . . . well . . . that is— Look here, just what is the arrangement between you and Mathaswentha?"

"I thought that was it. You've been seeing her, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have. And if you send me back there, I shall see her some more in spite of myself. Are you and she betrothed, or what?"

"I did have some such idea once." Padway put on the air of one about to make a great sacrifice. "But, my friend, I wouldn't stand in the way of anybody's happiness. I'm sure you're much better suited to her than I. My work keeps me too busy to make a good husband. So if you want to sue for her hand, go to it, with my blessing."

"You *mean* that?" Urias jumped up and began pacing the floor, fairly beaming. "I . . . I don't know how to thank you . . . it's the greatest thing you could do for me . . . I'm your friend for life—"

"Don't mention it; I'm glad to help you out. But now that you're down here, you might as well finish the job you came to do."

"Oh," said Urias soberly. "I suppose I ought to, at that. But how shall I press my suit, then?"

"Write her."

"But how can I? I don't know the pretty phrases. In fact, I've never written a love letter in my life."

"I'll help you out with that, too. Here, we can start right now." Padway got out writing materials, and they were presently concocting a letter to the princess.

"Let's see," said Padway reflectively, "we ought to tell her what her eyes are like."

"They're just like eyes, aren't they?"

"Of course, but in this business you compare them to the stars and things."

Urias thought. "They're about the color of a glacier I once saw in the alps."

"No, that wouldn't do. It would imply that they were as cold as ice."

"They also remind you of a polished sword blade."

"Similar objection. How about the northern seas?"

"*Hm-m-m.* Yes, I think that would do, Martinus. Gray as the northern seas."

"It has a fine poetic ring to it."

"So it has. Northern seas it shall be, then." Urias wrote slowly and awkwardly.

Padway said: "Hey, don't bear down so hard with that pen. You'll poke a hole in the paper."

As Urias was finishing the letter, Padway clapped on his hat and made for the door.

"*Hai,*" said Urias, "what's your hurry?"

Padway grinned. "I'm just going to see some friends; a family named Anicius. Nice people. I'll introduce you to them some day when you're safely sewed up."

Padway's original idea had been to introduce a mild form of selective conscription, beginning with the city of Rome and requiring the draftees to report for weekly drill. The Senate, which at this time was a mere municipal council, balked. Some of them disliked or distrusted Padway. Some wanted to be bribed.

Padway did not want to give in to them until he had tried everything else. He had Urias announce drills on a voluntary basis, at current wages. Results were disappointing.

Padway's thoughts were abruptly snatched from the remilitarization of the Italians when Junianus came in with a telegraph message. It read simply:

> WITTIGIS ESCAPED FROM DETENTION LAST NIGHT. NO TRACE OF HIM HAS BEEN FOUND.
> (SIGNED)
> ATURPAD THE PERSIAN,
> COMMANDING.

For a minute Padway simply stared at the message. Then he jumped up and yelled: "Fritharik! Get our horses!"

They clattered over to Urias' headquarters. Urias looked grave. "This puts me in an awkward position, Martinus. My uncle will undoubtedly try to regain his crown. He's a stubborn man, you know."

"I know. But you know how important it is to keep things going the way they are."

"*Ja.* I won't go back on you. But you couldn't expect me to try to harm my uncle. I like him, even if he is a thick-headed old grouch."

"You stick with me and I promise you I'll do my best to see that he isn't harmed. But just now I'm concerned with keeping him from harming *us.*"

"How do you suppose he got out? Bribery?"

"I know as much as you do. I doubt the bribery; at least Aturpad is considered an honorable man. What do you think Wittigis will do?"

"If it were me, I'd hide out for a while and gather my partisans. That would be logical. But my uncle never was very logical. And he hates Thiudahad worse than anything on earth. Especially after Thiudahad's attempt to have him murdered. My guess is that he'll head straight for Ravenna and try to do Thiudahad in personally."

"All right, then, we'll collect some fast cavalry and head that way ourselves."

Padway thought he was pretty well hardened to long-distance riding. But it was all he could do to stand the pace that Urias set. When they reached Ravenna in the early morning he was reeling, redeyed, in the saddle.

They asked no questions, but galloped straight for the palace. The town seemed normal enough. Most of the citizens were at breakfast. But at the palace the normal guard was not to be seen.

"That looks bad," said Urias. They and their men dismounted, drew their swords, and marched in six abreast. A guard appeared at the head of the stairs. He grabbed at his sword, then recognized Urias and Padway.

"Oh, it's you," he said noncommittally.

"Yes, it's us," replied Padway. "What's up?"

"Well . . . uh . . . you'd better go see for yourselves, noble sirs. Excuse me." And the Goth whisked out of sight.

They tramped on through the empty halls. Doors shut before they came to them, and there was whispering behind them. Padway wondered if they were walking into a trap. He sent back a squad to hold the front door.

At the entrance to the royal apartments they found a clump of guards. A couple of these brought their spears up, but the rest simply stood uncertainly. Padway said calmly, "Stand back, boys," and went in.

"Oh, merciful Christ!" said Urias softly.

There were several people standing around a body on the floor. Padway asked them to stand aside, which they did meekly. The body was that of Wittigis. His tunic was ripped by a dozen sword and spear wounds. The rug under him was sopping.

The chief usher looked amazedly at Padway. "This just happened, my lord. Yet you have come all the way from Rome because of it. How did you know?"

"I have ways," said Padway. "How did it happen?"

"Wittigis was let into the palace by a guard friendly to him. He would have killed our noble king, but he was seen, and other guards hurried to the rescue. The guards killed him," he added unnecessarily. Anybody could see that.

A sound from the comer made Padway look up. There crouched Thiudahad, half dressed, Nobody seemed to be paying much attention. Thiudahad's ashy face peered at Padway.

"Dear me, it's my new perfect, isn't it? Your name is Cassiodorus. But how much younger you look, my dear sir. Ah, me, we all grow old sometime. Heh-heh. Let's publish a book, my dear Cassiodorus. Heigh-ho, yes, indeed, a lovely new book with purple covers. Heh-heh. We'll serve it for dinner, with pepper and gravy. That's the way to eat a fowl. Yes, three hundred pages at least. By the way, have you seen that rascally general of mine, Wittigis? I heard he was coming to call. Dreadful bore; no scholar at all. Heigh-ho, dear me. I feel like dancing. Do you dance, my dear Wittigis? La-la-la, la-la-la, dum de-dum de-dum."

Padway told the king's house physician: "Take care of him, and don't let him out. The rest of you, go back to work as if nothing has happened. Somebody take charge of the body. Replace this rug, and make the preparations for a dignified but modest funeral. Urias, maybe you'd better tend to that." Urias was weeping. "Come on, old man, you can do your grieving later. I sympathize, but we've got things to do." He whispered something to him, whereat Urias cheered up.

Chapter XV

The members of the Gothic Royal Council appeared at Padway's office with a variety of scowls. They were men of substance and leisure, and did not like being practically dragged away from their breakfast tables, especially by a mere civil functionary.

Padway acquainted them with the circumstances. His news shocked them to temporary silence. He continued: "As you know, my lords, under the unwritten constitution of the Gothic nation, an insane king must be replaced as soon as possible. Permit me to suggest that present circumstances make the replacement of the unfortunate Thiudahad an urgent matter."

Wakkis growled: "That's partly *your* doing, young man. We could have bought off the Franks—"

"Yes, my lord. I know all that. The trouble is that the Franks won't stay bought, as you very well know. In any event, what's done is done. Neither the Franks nor Justinian have moved against us yet. If we can run the election of the new king off quickly, we shall not be any worse off than we are."

Wakkis replied: "We shall have to call another convention of the electors, I suppose."

Another councilor, Mannfrith, spoke up: "Apparently our young friend is right, much as I hate to take advice from outsiders. When and where shall the convention be?"

There were a lot of uncertain throaty noises from the Goths. Padway said: "If my lords please, I have a suggestion. Our new civil capital is to be at Florence, and what more fitting way of inaugurating it is there than holding our election there?"

There was more growling, but nobody produced a better idea. Padway knew perfectly well that they didn't like following his directions, but that, on

the other hand, they were glad to shirk thought and responsibility themselves.

Wakkis said: "We shall have to give time for the messages to go out, and for the electors to reach Florence—"

Just then Urias came in. Padway took him aside and whispered: "What did she say?"

"She says she will."

"When?"

"Oh, in about ten days, I think. It don't look very nice so soon after my uncle's death."

"Never mind that. It's now or never."

Mannfrith asked. "Who shall the candidates be? I'd like to run myself, only my rheumatism has been bothering me so."

Somebody said: "Thiudegiskel will be one. He's Thiudahad's logical successor."

Padway said: "I think you'll be pleased to hear that our esteemed General Urias will be a candidate."

"What?" cried Wakkis. "He's a fine young man, I admit, but he's ineligible. He's not an Amaling."

Padway broke into a triumphant grin. "Not now, my lords, but he will be by the time the election is called." The Goths looked startled. "And, my lords, I hope you'll all give us the pleasure of your company at the wedding."

During the wedding rehearsal, Mathaswentha got Padway aside. She said: "Really, Martinus, you've been most noble about this. I hope you won't grieve too much."

Padway tried his best to look noble. "My dear, your happiness is mine. And if you love this young man, I think you're doing just the right thing."

"I *do* love him," replied Mathaswentha. "Promise me you won't sit around and mope, but will go out and find some nice girl who is suited to you."

Padway sighed convincingly. "It'll be hard to forget, my dear. But since you ask it, I'll promise. Now, now, don't cry. What will Urias think? You want to make *him* happy, don't you? There, that's a sensible girl."

The wedding itself was quite a gorgeous affair in a semibarbaric way. Padway discovered an unsuspected taste for stage management, and introduced a wrinkle he'd seen in pictures of United States Military Academy weddings: that of having Urias' friends make an arch of swords under which the bride and groom walked on their way down the church steps. Padway himself looked as dignified as his moderate stature and nondescript features permitted. Inwardly he was holding on tight to repress a snicker. It had just occurred to him that Urias' long robe looked amazingly like a bathrobe he, Padway, had once owned, except that Padway's robe hadn't had pictures of saints embroidered on it in gold thread.

As the happy couple departed, Padway ducked out of sight around a pillar.

Mathaswentha, if she saw him out of the tail of her eye, may have thought that he was shedding a final tear. But actually he was allowing himself the luxury of a long-drawn *"Whew!"* of relief.

Before he reappeared, he heard a couple of Goths talking on the other side of the pillar:

"He'd make a good king, eh, Albehrts?"

"Maybe. *He* would, by himself. But I fear he'll be under the influence of this Martinus person. Not that I have anything specifically against Mysterious Martin, you understand. But—you know how it is."

"*Ja, ja.* Oh, well, one can always flip a sesterce to decide which to vote for."

Padway had every intention of keeping Urias under his influence. It seemed possible. Urias disliked and was impatient with matters of civil administration. He was a competent soldier, and at the same time was receptive to Padway's ideas. Padway thought somberly that if anything happened to *this* king he'd hunt a long time before finding another as satisfactory.

Padway had the news of the impending election sent out over the telegraph, thereby saving the week that would normally be necessary for messengers to travel the length and breadth of Italy, and incidentally convincing some of the Goths of the value of his contraptions. Padway also sent out another message, ordering all the higher military commanders to remain at their posts. He sold Urias the idea by arguing military necessity. His real reason was a determination to keep Thiudegiskel in Calabria during the election. Knowing Urias, he didn't dare explain this plan to him, for fear Urias would have an attack of knightly honor and, as ranking general, countermand the order.

The Goths had never seen an election conducted on time-honored American principles. Padway showed them. The electors arrived in Florence to find the town covered with enormous banners and posters reading:

VOTE FOR URIAS THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE!

Lower taxes! Bigger public works!
Security for the aged!
Efficient government!

And so forth. They also found a complete system of ward-heelers to take them in tow, show them the town—not that Florence was much to see in those days—and butter them up generally.

Three days before the election was due, Padway held a barbecue. He threw himself into debt for the fixings. Well not exactly; he threw poor Urias into debt, being much too prudent to acquire any more liabilities in his own name than he could help.

While he kept modestly in the background, Urias made a speech. Padway later heard comments to the effect that nobody had known Urias could make such good speeches. He grinned to himself. He had written the speech and had spent all his evenings for a week teaching Urias to deliver it. Privately Padway thought that his candidate's delivery still stank. But if the electors didn't mind, there was no reason why he should.

Padway and Urias relaxed afterward over a bottle of brandy. Padway said that the election looked like a pushover, and then had to explain what a pushover was. Of the two opposing candidates, one had withdrawn, and the other, Harjis Austrowald's son, was an elderly man with only the remotest connection with the Amal family.

Then one of the ward-heelers came in breathless. It seemed to Padway that people were always coming to see him breathless.

The man barked: "Thiudegiskel's here."

Padway wasted no time. He found where Thiudegiskel was staying, rounded up a few Gothic soldiers, and set out to arrest the young man. He found that Thiudegiskel had, with a gang of his own friends, taken over one of the better inns in town, pitching the previous guests and their belongings out in the street.

The gang were gorging themselves downstairs in plain sight. They hadn't yet changed their traveling clothes, and they looked tired but tough. Padway marched in. Thiudegiskel looked up. "Oh, it's *you* again. What do you want?"

Padway announced: "I have a warrant for your arrest on grounds of insubordination and deserting your post, signed by Ur—"

The high-pitched voice interrupted: "*Ja, ja,* I know all about that, my dear *Sineigs.* Maybe you thought I'd stay away from Florence while you ran off an election without me, eh? But I'm not like that, Martinus. Not one little bit. I'm here, I'm a candidate, and anything you try now I'll remember when I'm king. That's one thing about me; I've got an infernally long memory."

Padway turned to his soldiers: "Arrest him!"

There was a great scraping of chairs as the gang rose to its feet and grasped its collective sword hilts. Padway looked for his soldiers; they hadn't moved.

"Well?" he snapped.

The oldest of them, a kind of sergeant, cleared his throat. "Well, sir, it's this way. Now we know you're our superior and all that. But things are kind of uncertain, with this election and all, and we don't know whom we'll be taking orders from in a couple of days. Suppose we arrest this young man, and then he gets elected king? That wouldn't be so good for us, now would it, sir?"

"Why—you—" raged Padway.

But the only effect was that the soldiers began to slide out the door. The young Gothic noble named Willimer was whispering to Thiudegiskel, sliding his sword a few inches out of the scabbard and back.

Thiudegiskel shook his head and said to Padway: "My friend here doesn't seem to like you, Martinus. He swears he'll pay you a visit as soon as the election is over. So it might be healthier if you left Italy for a little trip. In fact, it's all I can do to keep him from paying his visit right now."

The soldiers were mostly gone now. Padway realized that he'd better go too, if he didn't want these well-born thugs to make hamburger of him.

He mustered what dignity he could. "You know the law against dueling."

Thiudegiskel's invincibly good-natured arrogance wasn't even dented. "Sure, I know it. But remember. *I'll* be the one enforcing it. I'm just giving you fair warning, Martinus. That's one thing about—"

But Padway didn't wait to hear Thiudegiskel's next contribution to the inexhaustible subject of himself. He went, full of rage and humiliation. By the time he finished cursing his own stupidity and thought to round up his eastern troops—the few who weren't up north with Belisarius—and make a second attempt, it was too late. Thiudegiskel had collected a large crowd of partisans in and around the hotel; and it would take a battle to dislodge them. The ex-Imperialists seemed far from enthusiastic over the prospect, and Urias muttered something about its being only honorable to let the late king's son have a fair try for the crown.

The next day Thomasus the Syrian arrived. He came in wheezing. "How are you, Martinus? I didn't want to miss all the excitement, so I came up from Rome. Brought my family along."

That meant something, Padway knew, for Thomasus' family consisted not only of his wife and four children, but an aged uncle, a nephew, two nieces, and his black house slave Ajax and *his* wife and children.

He answered: "I'm fine, thanks. Or I shall be when I catch up on my sleep. How are you?"

"Fine, thanks. Business has been good for a change."

"And how is your friend God?" Padway asked with a straight face.

"He's fine too—why, you blasphemous young scoundrel! That will cost you extra interest on your next loan. How's the election?"

Padway told him. "It won't be as easy as I thought. Thiudegiskel has developed a lot of support among the conservative Goths, who don't care for self-made men like Wittigis and Urias. The upper crust prefer an Amaling by birth—"

"Upper crust? Oh, I see! Ha, ha, ha! I hope God listens to you. It might put Him in a good humor the next time He considers sending a plague or a quake."

Padway continued: "And Thiudegiskel is not as stupid as one might expect. He'd hardly arrived before he'd sent out friends to tear down my posters and put up some of his own. His weren't much to look at, but I was surprised that he thought of using any. There were fistfights and one stabbing, not fatal, fortunately. So . . . you know Dagalaif Nevitta's son?"

"The marshal? By name only."

"He's not eligible to vote. Well, the town watch is too scared of the Goths to keep order, and I don't dare use my own guards for fear of rousing all the Goths against the 'foreigners.' I blackmailed the city fathers into hiring Dagalaif to deputize the other marshals who are not electors as election police. As Nevitta is on our side, I don't know how impartial my friend Dagalaif will be. But it'll save us from a pitched battle, I hope."

"Wonderful, wonderful, Martinus. Don't overreach yourself; some of the Goths call your electioneering methods newfangled and undignified. I'll ask God to keep a special watch over you and your candidate."

The day before the election, Thiudegiskel showed his political astuteness by throwing a barbecue even bigger than Padway's. Padway, having some mercy on Urias' modest purse, had limited his party to the electors. Thiudegiskel, with the wealth of Thiudahad's immense Tuscan estates to draw upon, shot the works. He invited all the electors and their families and friends also.

Padway and Urias and Thomasus, with the former's ward-heelers, the latter's family, and a sizable guard, arrived at the field outside Florence after the festivities had begun. The field was covered with thousands of Goths of all ages, sizes, and sexes, and was noisy with East-German gutturals, the clank of scabbards, and the *flop-flop* of leather pants.

A Goth bustled up to them with beer suds in his whiskers. "Here, here, what are you people doing? You weren't invited."

"Ni ogs, frijond," said Padway.

"What? You're telling *me* not to be afraid?" The Goth bristled.

"We aren't even trying to come to your party. We're just having a little picnic of our own. There's no law against picnics, is there?"

"Well—then why all the armament? Looks to me as though you were planning a kidnapping."

"There, there," soothed Padway. "You're wearing a sword, aren't you?"

"But I'm official. I'm one of Willimer's men."

"So are these people our men. Don't worry about us. We'll stay on the other side of the road, if it'll make you happy. Now run along and enjoy your beer."

'Well, don't try anything. We'll be ready for you if you do." The Goth departed, muttering over Padway's logic.

Padway's party made themselves comfortable across the road, ignoring the hostile glares from Thiudegiskel's partisans. Padway himself sprawled on the grass, eating little and watching the barbecue through narrowed eyes.

Thomasus said: "Most excellent General Urias, that look tells me our friend Martinus is planning something particularly hellish."

Thiudegiskel and some of his gang mounted the speakers' stand. Willimer introduced the candidate with commendable brevity. Then Thiudegiskel began

to speak. Padway hushed his own party and strained his ears. Even so, with so many people, few of them completely silent, between him and the speaker, he missed a lot of Thiudegiskel's shrill Gothic. Thiudegiskel appeared to be bragging as usual about his own wonderful character. But, to Padway's consternation, his audience ate it up. And they howled with laughter at the speaker's rough and ready humor.

"—and did you know, friends, that General Urias was twelve years old before his poor mother could train him not to wet his bed? It's a fact. That's one thing about me; I never exaggerate. Of course you *couldn't* exaggerate Urias' peculiarities. For instance, the first time he called on a girl—"

Urias was seldom angry, but Padway could see the young general was rapidly approaching incandescence. He'd have to think of something quickly, or there *would* be a battle.

His eye fell on Ajax and Ajax's family. The slave's eldest child was a chocolate-colored, frizzy-haired boy of ten.

Padway asked: "Does anybody know whether Thiudegiskel's married?"

"Yes," replied Urias. "The swine was married just before he left for Calabria. Nice girl, too; a cousin of Willimer."

"*Hm-m-m.* Say, Ajax, does that oldest boy of yours speak any Gothic?"

"Why no, my lord, why should he?"

"What's his name?"

"Priam."

"Priam, would you like to earn a couple of sesterces, all your own?"

The boy jumped up and bowed. Padway found such a servile gesture in a child vaguely repulsive. Must do something about slavery some day, he thought. "Yes, my Lord," squeaked the boy.

"Can you say the word *'atta'?* That's Gothic for 'father.' "

Priam dutifully said: "*Atta.* Now where are my sesterces, my lord?"

"Not so fast, Priam. That's just the beginning of the job. You practice saying *'atta'* for a while."

Padway stood up and peered at the field. He called softly: "*Hai,* Dagalaif!"

The marshal detached himself from the crowd and came over. "*Hails,* Martinus! What can I do for you?"

Padway whispered his instructions.

Then he said to Priam: "You see the man in the red cloak on the stand, the one who is talking? Well, you're to go over there and climb up on the stand, and say *'atta'* to him. Loudly, so everybody can hear. Say it a lot of times, until something happens. Then you run back here."

Priam frowned in concentration. "But the man isn't my father! This is my father!" He pointed to Ajax.

"I know. But you do as I say if you want your money. Can you remember your instructions?"

So Priam trailed off through the crowd of Goths with Dagalaif at his heels. They were lost to Padway's sight for a few minutes, while Thiudegiskel shrilled on. Then the little Negro's form appeared on the stand, boosted up by Dagalaif's strong arms. Padway clearly heard the childish cry of *"Atta!"*

Thiudegiskel stopped in the middle of a sentence. Priam repeated: "*Atta! Atta!*"

"He seems to know you!" shouted a voice down front.

Thiudegiskel stood silent, scowling and turning red. A low mutter of laughter ran through the Goths and swelled to a roar.

Priam called *"Atta!"* once more, louder.

Thiudegiskel grabbed his sword hilt and started for the boy. Padway's heart missed a beat.

But Priam leaped off the stand into Dagalaif's arms, leaving Thiudegiskel to shout and wave his sword. He was apparently yelling, "It's a lie!" over and over. Padway could see his mouth move, but his words were lost in the thunder of the Gothic nation's Wagnerian laughter.

Dagalaif and Priam appeared, running toward them. The Goth was staggering slightly and holding his midriff. Padway was alarmed until he saw Dagalaif was suffering from laughing and a coughing spell.

He slapped him on the back until the coughs and gasps moderated. Then he said: "If we hang around here, Thiudegiskel will recover his wits, and he'll be angry enough to set his partisans on us with cold steel. In my country we had a word 'scram' that is, I think, applicable. Let's go."

"Hey, my lord," squealed Priam, "where's my two sesterces? Oh, thank you, my lord. Do you want me to call anybody else 'father,' my lord?"

CHAPTER XVI

Padway told Urias: "It looks like a sure thing now. Thiudegiskel will never live this afternoon's episode down. We Americans have some methods for making elections come out the right way, such as stuffing ballot boxes, and the use of floaters. But I don't think it'll be necessary to use any of them."

"What on earth is a floater, Martinus? You mean a float such as one uses in fishing?"

"No; I'll explain sometime. I don't want to corrupt the Gothic electoral system more than is absolutely necessary."

"Look here, if anybody investigates, they'll learn that Thiudegiskel was the innocent victim of a joke this afternoon. Then won't the effect be lost?"

"No, my dear Urias, that's not how the minds of electors work. Even if he's proved innocent, he's been made such an utter fool of that nobody will take him seriously, regardless of his personal merits, if any."

Just then a ward-heeler came in breathless. He gasped: "Thiu— Thiudegiskel—"

Padway complained: "I am going to make it a rule that people who want to see me have to wait outside until they get their breath. What is it, Roderik?"

Roderik finally got it out. "Thiudegiskel has left Florence, distinguished Martinus. Nobody knows whither. Willimer and some of his other friends went with him."

Padway immediately sent out over the telegraph Urias' order depriving Thiudegiskel of his colonel's rank—or its rough equivalent in the vague and amorphous Gothic system of command. Then he sat and stewed and waited for news.

It came the next morning during the voting. But it did not concern Thiudegiskel. It was that a large Imperialist army had crossed over from Sicily

and landed, not at Scylla on the toe of the Italian boot where one would expect, but up the coast of Bruttium at Vibo.

Padway told Urias immediately, and urged: "Don't say anything for a few hours. This election is in the bag—I mean it's certain—and we don't want to disturb it."

But rumors began to circulate. Telegraph systems are run by human beings, and few groups of more than a dozen human beings have kept a secret for long. By the time Urias' election by a two-to-one majority was announced, the Goths were staging an impromptu demonstration in the streets of Florence, demanding to be led against the invader.

Then more details came in. The Imperialists' army was commanded by Bloody John, and numbered a good fifty thousand men. Evidently Justinian, furious about Padway's letter, had been shipping adequate force into Sicily in relays.

Padway and Urias figured that they could, without recalling troops from Provence and Dalmatia, assemble perhaps half again as many troops as Bloody John had. But further news soon reduced this estimate. That able, ferocious, and unprincipled solider sent a detachment across the Sila Mountains by a secondary road from Vibo to Scyllacium, while he advanced with his main body down the Popilian Way to Reggio. The Reggio garrison of fifteen thousand men, trapped at the end of the toe of the boot, struck a few blows for the sake of their honor and surrendered. Bloody John reunited his forces and started north toward the ankle.

Padway saw Urias off in Rome with many misgivings. The army looked impressive, surely, with its new corps of horse archers and its batteries of mobile catapults. But Padway knew that the new units were inexperienced in their novel ways of fighting; and that the organization was likely to prove brittle in practice.

Once Urias and the army had left, there was no more point in worrying. Padway resumed his experiments with gunpowder. Perhaps he should try charcoal from different woods. But this meant time, a commodity of which Padway had precious little. He soon learned that he had none at all.

By piecing together the contradictory information that came in by telegraph, Padway figured out that this had happened: Thiudegiskel had reached his force in Calabria without interference. He had refused to recognize the telegraphic order depriving him of his command, and had talked his men into doing likewise. Padway guessed that the words of an able and self-confident speaker like Thiudegiskel would carry more weight with the mostly illiterate Goths than a brief, cold message arriving over a mysterious contraption.

Bloody John had moved cautiously; he had only reached Consentia when Urias arrived to face him. That might have been arranged beforehand with Thiudegiskel, to draw Urias far enough south to trap him.

But, while Urias and Bloody John sparred for openings along the river Crathis, Thiudegiskel arrived in Urias' rear—on the Imperialist side. Though he had only five thousand lancers, their unexpected charge broke the main Gothic army's morale. In fifteen minutes the Crathis Valley was full of thousands of Goths—lancers, horse archers, foot archers, and pike men—streaming off in every direction. Thousands were ridden down by Bloody John's cuirassiers and the large force of Gepid and Lombard horse he had with him. Other thousands surrendered. The rest ran off into the hills, where the rapidly gathering dusk hid them.

Urias managed to hold his lifeguard regiment together, and attacked Thiudegiskel's force of deserters. The story was that Urias had personally killed Thiudegiskel. Padway, knowing the fondness of soldiers for myths of this sort, had his doubts. But it was agreed that Thiudegiskel had been killed, and that Urias and his men had disappeared into the Imperial host in one final desperate charge, and had been seen no more by those on the Gothic side who escaped from the field.

For hours Padway sat at his desk, staring at the pile of telegraph messages and at a large and painfully inaccurate map of Italy.

"Can I get you anything, excellent boss?" asked Fritharik.

Padway shook his head.

Junianus shook his head. "I fear that our Martinus' mind has become unhinged by disaster."

Fritharik snorted. "That just shows you don't know him. He gets that way when he's planning something. Just wait. He'll have a devilish clever scheme for upsetting the Greeks yet."

Junianus put his head in the door. "Some more messages, my lord."

"What are they?"

"Bloody John is halfway to Salerno. The natives are welcoming him. Belisarius reports he has defeated a large force of Franks."

"Come here, Junianus. Would you two boys mind stepping out for a minute? Now, Junianus, you're a native of Lucania, aren't you?"

"Yes, my lord."

"You were a serf, weren't you?"

"Well . . . uh . . . my lord . . . you see—" The husky young man suddenly looked fearful.

"Don't worry; I wouldn't let you be dragged back to your landlord's estate for anything."

"Well—yes, my lord?"

"When the messages speak of the 'natives' welcoming the Imperialists, doesn't that mean the Italian landlords more than anybody else?"

"Yes, my lord. The serfs don't care one way or the other. One landlord is as oppressive as the next, so why should they get themselves killed fighting for

any set of masters, Greek or Italian or Gothic as the case may be?"

"If they were offered their holdings as free proprietors, with no landlords to worry about, do you think they'd fight for that?"

"Why?"—Junianus took a deep breath—"I think they would. Yes. Only it's such an extraordinary idea, if you don't mind my saying so."

"Even on the side of Arian heretics?"

"I don't think that would matter. The curials and the city folk may take their Orthodoxy seriously. But a lot of the peasants are half pagan anyway. And they worship their land more than any alleged heavenly powers."

"That's about what I thought," said Padway. "Here are some messages to send out. The first is an edict, issued by me in Urias' name, emancipating the serfs of Bruttium, Lucania, Calabria, Apulia, Campania, and Samnium. The second is an order to General Belisarius to leave a screening force in Provence to fight a delaying action in case the Franks attack again and return south with his main body at once. Oh, Fritharik! Will you get Gudareths for me? And I want to see the foreman of the printshop."

When Gudareths arrived, Padway explained his plans to him. The little Gothic officer whistled. "My, my, that *is* a desperate measure, respectable Martinus. I'm not sure the Royal Council will approve. If you free all these low-born peasants, how shall we get them back into serfdom again?"

"We won't," snapped Padway. "As for the Royal Council, most of them were with Urias."

"But, Martinus, you can't make a fighting force out of them in a week or two. Take the word of an old soldier who has killed hundreds of foes with his own right arm. Yes, thousands, by God!"

"I know all that," said Padway wearily.

"What then? These Italians are no good for fighting. No spirit. You'd better rely on what Gothic forces we can scrape together. Real fighters, like me."

Padway said: "I don't expect to lick Bloody John with raw recruits. But we can give him a hostile country to advance through. You tend to those pikes, and dig up some more retired officers."

Padway got his army together and set out from Rome on a bright spring morning. It was not much of an army to look at: elderly Goths who had supposed themselves retired from active service, and young sprigs whose voices had not finished changing.

As they cluttered down Patrician Street from the Pretorian Camp, Padway had an idea. He told his staff to keep on; he'd catch up with them. And off he cantered, *poddle-op, poddle-op,* up the Suburban Slope toward the Esquiline.

Dorothea came out of Anicius' house. "Martinus!" she cried. "Are you off somewhere again?"

"That's right."

"You haven't paid us a real call in months! Every time I see you, you have

only a minute before you must jump on your horse and gallop off somewhere."

Padway made a helpless gesture. "It'll be different when I've retired from all this damned war and politics. Is your excellent father in?"

"No; he's at the library. He'll be disappointed not to have seen you."

"Give him my best."

"Is there going to be more war? I've heard Bloody John is in Itāly."

"It looks that way."

"Will you be in the fighting?"

"Probably."

"Oh, Martinus. Wait just a moment." She ran into the house.

She returned with a little leather bag on a loop of string. "This will keep you safe if anything will."

"What is it?"

"A fragment of St. Polycarp's skull."

Padway's eyebrows went up. "Do you believe in its effectiveness?"

"Oh, certainly. My mother paid enough for it, there's no doubt that it's genuine." She slipped the loop over his head and tucked the bag through the neck opening in his cloak.

It had not occurred to Padway that a well-educated girl would accept the superstitions of her age. At the same time he was touched. He said: "Thank you, Dorothea, from the bottom of my heart, But there's something that I think will be a more effective charm yet."

"What?"

"This." He kissed her mouth lightly, and threw himself aboard his horse. Dorothea stood with a surprised but not displeased look. Padway swung the animal around and sent it back down the avenue, *poddle-op, poddle-op*. He turned in the saddle to wave back—and was almost pitched off. The horse plunged and skidded into the nigh ox of a team that had just pulled a wagon out of a side street.

The driver shouted: "*Carus-dominus, Jesus-Christus, Maria-mater-Dei*, why don't you look where you're going? *S'an'tus-Petrus-Paulusque-Joannesque-Lucasque* . . ."

By the time the driver had run out of apostles Padway had ascertained that there was no damage. Dorothea was not in sight. He hoped that she had not witnessed the ruin of his pretty gesture.

CHAPTER XVII

It was the latter part of May, 537, when Padway entered Benevento with his army. Little by little the force had grown as the remnants of Urias' army trickled north. Only that morning a forage-cutting party had found three of these Goths who had settled down comfortably in a local farmhouse over the owner's protests, and prepared to sit out the rest of the war in comfort. These joined up, too, though not willingly.

Instead of coming straight down the Tyrrhenian or western coast to Naples, Padway had marched across Italy to the Adriatic, and had come down that coast to Teate. Then he had cut inland to Lucera and Benevento. As there was no telegraph line yet on the east coast, Padway kept in touch with Bloody John's movements by sending messengers across the Apennines to the telegraph stations that were still out of the enemy's hands. He timed his movements to reach Benevento after John had captured Salerno on the other side of the peninsula, had left a detachment masking Naples, and had started for Rome by the Latin Way.

Padway hoped to come down on his rear in the neighborhood of Capua, while Belisarius, if he got his orders straight, would come directly from Rome and attack the Imperialists in front.

Somewhere between Padway and the Adriatic was Gudareths, profanely shepherding a train of wagons full of pikes and of handbills bearing Padway's emancipation proclamation. The pikes had been dug out of attics and improvised out of fence palings and such things. The Gothic arsenals at Pavia, Verona, and other northern cities had been too far away to be of help in time.

The news of the emancipation had spread like a gasoline fire. The peasants had risen all over southern Italy. But they seemed more interested in sacking and burning their landlords' villas than in joining the army.

A small fraction of them had joined up; this meant several thousand men. Padway, when he rode back to the rear of his column and watched this great disorderly rabble swarming along the road, chattering like magpies and taking time out to snooze when they felt like it, wondered how much of an asset they would be. Here and there one wore great-grandfather's legionary helmet and loricated cuirass, which had been hanging on the wall of his cottage for most of a century.

Benevento is on a small hill at the confluence of the Calore and Sabbato Rivers. As they plodded into the town, Padway saw several Goths sitting against one of the houses. One of these looked familiar. Padway rode up to him, and cried: "Dagalaif!"

The marshal looked up. *"Hails,"* he said in a toneless, weary voice. There was a bandage around his head, stained with black blood where his left ear should have been. "We heard you were coming this way, so we waited."

"Where's Nevitta?"

"My father is dead."

"What? Oh." Padway was silent for seconds. Then he said: "Oh, hell. He was one of the few real friends I had."

"I know. He died like a true Goth."

Padway sighed and went about his business of getting his force settled. Dagalaif continued sitting against the wall, looking at nothing in particular.

They lay in Benevento for a day. Padway learned that bloody John had almost passed the road junction at Calatia on his way north. There was no news from Belisarius, so that the best Padway could hope for was to fight a delaying action, and hold John in southern Italy until more forces arrived.

Padway left his infantry in Benevento and rode down to Calatia with his cavalry. By this time he had a fairly respectable force of mounted archers. They were not as good as the Imperialist cuirassiers, but they would have to do.

Fritharik, riding beside him, said: "Aren't the flowers pretty, excellent boss? They remind me of the gardens in my beautiful estate in Carthage. Ah, that was something to see—"

Padway turned a haggard face. He could still grin, though it hurt. "Getting poetical, Fritharik?"

"Me a poet? *Honh!* Just because I like to have some pleasant memories for my last earthly ride—"

"What do you mean, your last?"

"I mean my last, and you can't tell me anything different. Bloody John outnumbers us three to one, they say. It won't be a nameless grave for us, because they won't bother to bury us. Last night I had a prophetic dream . . ."

As they approached Calatia, where Trajan's Way athwart Italy joined the Latin Way from Salerno to Rome, their scouts reported that the tail of Bloody

John's army had just pulled out of town. Padway snapped his orders. A squadron of lancers trotted out in front, and a force of mounted archers followed them. They disappeared down the road. Padway rode up to the top of a knoll to watch them. They got smaller and smaller, disappearing and reappearing over humps in the road. He could hear the faint murmur of John's army, out of sight over the olive groves.

Then there was shouting and clattering, tiny with distance, like a battle between gnats and mosquitoes. Padway fretted with impatience. His telescope was no help, not being able to see around corners. The little sounds went on, and on, and on. Faint columns of smoke began to rise over the olive trees. Good; that meant that his men had set fire to Bloody John's wagon train. His first worry had been that they'd insist on plundering it in spite of orders.

Then a little dark cluster, toppled by rested lances that looked as thin as hairs, appeared on the road. Padway squinted through his telescope to make sure they were his men. He trotted down the knoll and gave some more orders. Half his horse archers spread themselves out in a long crescent on either side of the road, and a body of lancers grouped themselves behind it.

Time passed, and the men sweated in their scalemail shirts. Then the advance guard appeared, riding hard. They were grinning, and some waved bits of forbidden plunder. They clattered down the road between the waiting bowmen.

Their commander rode up to Padway. "Worked like a charm!" he shouted. "We came down on their wagons, chased off the wagon guards, and set them on fire. Then they came back at us. We did like you said; spread the bowmen out and filled them full of quills as they charged; then hit them with the lance when they were all nice and confused. They came back for more, twice. Then John himself came down on us with his whole damned army. So we cleared out. They'll be along any minute."

"Fine," replied Padway. "You know your orders. Wait for us at Mt. Tifata pass."

So they departed, and Padway waited. But not for long. A column of Imperial cuirassiers appeared, riding hell-for-leather. Padway knew this meant Bloody John was sacrificing order to speed in his pursuit, as troops couldn't travel through the fields and groves alongside the road at any such rate. Even if he'd deployed it would take his wings some time to come up.

The Imperialists grew bigger and bigger, and their hoofs made a great pounding on the stone-paved road. They looked very splendid, with their cloaks and plumes on their officers' helmets streaming out behind. Their commander, in gilded armor, saw what he was coming to and gave an order. Lances were slung over shoulders and bows were strung. By that time they were well within range of the crescent, and the Goths opened fire. The quick, flat snap of the bowstrings and the whiz of the arrows added themselves to the clamor

of the Byzantines' approach. The commander's horse, a splendid white animal, reared up and was bowled over by another horse that charged into it. The head of the Imperialist column crumpled up into a mass of milling horses and men.

Padway looked at the commander of his body of lancers; swung his arm around his head twice and pointed at the Imperialists. The line of horse archers opened up, and the Gothic knights charged through. As usual they went slowly at first, but by the time they reached the Imperialists their heavy horses had picked up irresistible momentum. Back went the cuirassiers with a great clatter, defending themselves desperately at close quarters, but pulling out and getting their bows into action as soon as they could.

Out of the corner of his eye, Padway saw a group of horsemen ride over a nearby hilltop. That meant that Bloody John's wings were coming up. He had his trumpeter signal the retreat. But the knights kept on pressing the Imperialist column back. They had the advantage in weight of men and horses, and they knew it. Padway kicked his horse into a gallop down the road after them. If he didn't stop the damned fools they'd be swallowed up by the Imperialist army.

An arrow went by Padway uncomfortably close. He found the peculiar screech that it made much harder on the nerves than he'd expected. He caught up with his Goths, dragged their commander out of the press by main force, and shouted in his ear that it was time to withdraw.

The men yelled back at him: *"Ni! Nist!* Good fighting!" and tore out of Padway's grip to plunge back in.

While Padway wondered what to do, an Imperialist broke through the Goths and rode straight at him. Padway had not thought to get his sword out. He drew it now, then had to throw himself to one side to avoid the other's lance point. He lost a stirrup, lost his reins, and almost lost his sword and his horse. By the time he had pulled himself back upright, the Imperialist was out of sight. Padway in his haste had nicked his own horse with his sword. The animal began to dance around angrily. Padway dug his left fingers into its mane and hung on.

The Goths now began to stream back down the road. In a few seconds they were all galloping off except a few surrounded by the Imperialists. Padway wondered miserably if he'd be left on this uncontrollable nag to face the Byzantines alone, when the horse of its own accord set off after its fellows.

In theory it was a strategic retreat. But from the look of the Gothic knights, Padway wondered if it would be possible to stop them this side of the Alps.

Padway's horse tossed its reins up to where Padway could grab them. Padway had just begun to get the animal under control when he sighted a man on foot, bareheaded but gaudy in gilded armor. It was the commander of the Imperialist column. Padway rode at him. The man started to run. Padway

started to swing his sword, then realized that he had no sword to swing. He had no recollection of dropping it, but he must have done so when he grabbed the reins. He leaned over and grabbed a fistful of hair. The man yelled, and came along in great bucking jumps.

A glance back showed that the Imperialists had disposed of the Goths who had not been able to extricate themselves, and were getting their pursuit under way.

Padway handed his prisoner over to a Goth. The Goth leaned and pulled the Imperialist officer up over his pommel, face down, so that half of him hung on each side. Padway saw him ride off, happily spanking the unfortunate Easterner with the flat of his sword.

According to plan, the horse archers fell in behind the lancers and galloped after them, the rearmost ones shooting backward.

It was nine miles to the pass, most of it uphill. Padway hoped never to have such a ride again. He was sure that at the next jounce his guts would burst from his abdomen and spill abroad. By the time they were within sight of the pass, the horses of both the pursued and the pursuers were so blown that both were walking. Some men had even dismounted to lead their horses. Padway remembered the story of the day in Texas that was so hot that a coyote was seen chasing a jackrabbit with both walking. He translated the story into Gothic, making a coyote a fox, and told it to the nearest soldier. It ran slowly down the line.

The bluffs were yellow in a late afternoon sun when the Gothic column finally stumbled through the pass. They had lost few men, but any really vigorous pursuer could have ridden them down and rolled them out of their saddles with ease. Fortunately the Imperialists were just about as tired. But they came on nevertheless.

Padway heard one officer's shout, echoing up the walls of the pass: "You'll rest when I tell you to, you lazy swine."

Padway looked around, and saw with satisfaction that the force he had sent up ahead were waiting quietly in their places. These were the men who had not been used at all yet. The gang who had burned the wagons were drawn up behind them, and those who had just sprawled on the ground still farther up the pass.

On came the Imperialists. Padway could see men's heads turn as they looked nervously up the slopes. But Bloody John had apparently not yet admitted that his foe might be conducting an intelligent campaign. The Imperialist column clattered echoing into the narrowest part of the pass, the slanting rays of the sun shooting after them.

Then there was a great thumping roar as boulders and tree trunks came bounding down the slopes. A horse shrieked quite horribly, and the Imperialists scuttled around like ants whose nest had been disturbed. Padway signaled a squadron of lancers to charge.

There was room for only six horses abreast, and even so it was a tight fit. The rocks and logs hadn't done much damage to the Imperialists, except to form a heap cutting their leading column in two. And now the Gothic knights struck the fragment that had passed the point of the break. The cuirassiers, unable to maneuver or even to use their bows, were jammed back against the barrier by their heavier opponents. The fight ended when the surviving Imperialists slid off their horses and scrambled back to safety on foot. The Goths rounded up the abandoned horses and led them back whooping.

Bloody John withdrew a couple of bowshots. Then he sent a small group of cuirassiers forward to lay down a barrage of arrows. Padway moved some dismounted Gothic archers into the pass. These, shooting from behind the barrier, caused the Imperialists so much trouble that the cuirassiers were soon withdrawn.

Bloody John now sent some Lombard lancers forward to sweep the archers out of the way. But the barrier stopped their charge dead. While they were picking their way, a step at a time, among the boulders, the Goths filled them full of arrows at close range. By the time the bodies of a dozen horses and an equal number of Lombards had been added to the barrier, the Lombards had had enough.

By this time it would have been obvious to a much stupider general than Bloody John that in those confined quarters horses were about as useful as green parrots. The fact that the Imperialists could hold their end of the pass as easily as Padway held his could not have been much comfort, because they were trying to get through it and Padway was not. Bloody John dismounted some Lombards and Gepids and sent them forward on foot. Padway meanwhile had moved some dismounted lancers up behind the barrier, so that their spears made a thick cluster. The archers moved back and up the walls to shoot over the knights' heads.

The Lombards and Gepids came on at a slow dogtrot. They were equipped with regular Imperialist mail shirts, but they were still strange-looking men, with the backs of their heads shaven and their front hair hanging down on each side of their faces in two long, butter-greased braids. They carried swords, and some had immense two-handed battleaxes. As they got closer they began to scream insults at the Goths, who understood their East-German dialects well enough and yelled back.

The attackers poured howling over the barrier and began hacking at the edge of spears which were too close together to slip between easily. More attackers, coming from behind, pushed the leaders into the spear points. Some were stuck. Others wedged their bodies in between the spear shafts and got at spearmen. Presently the front ranks were a tangle of grunting, snarling men packed too closely to use their weapons, while those behind them tried to reach over their heads.

The archers shot and shot. Arrows bounced off helmets and stuck quivering in big wooden shields. Men who were pierced could neither fall nor withdraw.

An archer skipped back among the rocks to get more arrows. Gothic heads turned to look at him. A couple more archers followed, though the quivers of these had not been emptied. Some of the rearmost knights started to follow them.

Padway saw a rout in the making. He grabbed one man and took his sword away from him. Then he climbed up to the rock vacated by the first archer, yelling something unclear even to himself. The men turned their eyes on him.

The sword was a huge one. Padway gripped it in both hands, hoisted it over his head, and swung at the nearest enemy, whose head was on a level with his waist. The sword came down on the man's helmet with a clang, squashing it over his eyes. Padway struck again and again. That Imperialist disappeared; Padway hit at another. He hit at helmets and shields and bare heads and arms and shoulders. He never could tell when his blows were effective, because by the time he recovered from each whack the picture had changed.

Then there were no heads but Gothic ones within reach. The Imperialist were crawling back over the barrier, lugging wounded men with blood-soaked clothes and arrows sticking in them.

At a glance there seemed to be about a dozen Goths down. Padway for a moment wondered angrily why the enemy had left fewer bodies than that. It occurred to him that some of these dozen were only moderately wounded, and that the enemy had carried off most of their casualties.

Fritharik and his orderly Tirdat and others were clustering around Padway, telling him what a demon fighter he was. He couldn't see it; all he had done was climb up on a rock, reach over the heads of a couple of his own men, and take a few swipes at an enemy who was having troubles of his own and could not hit back. There had been no more science to it than to using a pickax.

The sun had set, and Bloody John's army retired down the valley to set up its tents and cook its supper. Padway's Goths did likewise. The smell of cooking fires drifted up and down pleasantly. Anybody would have thought that here were two gangs of pleasure seeking campers, but for the pile of dead men and horses at the barrier.

Padway had no time for introspection. There were injured men, and he had no confidence in their ability to give themselves first aid. He raised no objections to their prayers and charms and potations of dust from a saint's tomb stirred in water. But he saw to it that bandages were boiled—which of course was a bit of the magic of Mysterious Martinus—and applied rationally.

One man had lost an eye, but was still full of fight. Another had three fingers gone, and was weeping about it. A third was cheerful with a stab in the

abdomen. Padway knew this one would die of peritonitis before long, and that nothing could be done about it.

Padway, not underestimating his opponent, threw out a very wide and close-meshed system of outposts. He was justified; an hour before dawn his sentries began to drift in. Bloody John, it transpired, was working two large bodies of Anatolian foot archers over the hills on either side of them. Padway saw that his position would soon be untenable. So his Goths, yawning and grumbling, were routed out of their blankets and started for Benevento.

When the sun came up and he had a good look at his men, Padway became seriously concerned for their morale. They grumbled and looked almost as discouraged as Fritharik did regularly. They did not understand strategic retreats. Padway wondered how long it would be before they began to run away in real earnest.

At Benevento there was only one bridge over the Sabbato, a fairly swift stream. Padway thought he could hold this bridge for some time, and that Bloody John would be forced to attack him because of the loss of his provisions and the hostility of the peasantry.

When they came out on the plain around the confluence of the two little rivers, Padway found a horrifying surprise. A swarm of his peasant recruits was crossing the bridge toward him. Several thousand had already crossed. He had to be able to get his own force over the bridge quickly, and he knew what would happen if that bottleneck became jammed with retreating troops.

Gudareths rode out to meet him. "I followed your orders!" he shouted. "I tried to hold them back. But they got the idea they could lick the Greeks themselves, and started out regardless. I told you they were no good!"

Padway looked back. The Imperialists were in plain sight, and as he watched they began to deploy. It looked like the end of the adventure. He heard Fritharik make a remark about graves, and Tirdat ask if there wasn't a message he could take—preferably to a far-off place.

The Italian serfs had meanwhile seen the Gothic cavalry galloping up with the Imperialists in pursuit, and had formed their own idea that the battle was lost. Ripples of movement ran through their disorderly array, and its motion was presently reversed.

Soon the road up to the town was white with running Italians. Those who had crossed the bridge were jammed together in a clawing mob trying to get back over.

Padway yelled in a cracked voice, to Gudareths:

"Get back over the river somehow! Send mounted men out on the roads to stop the runaways! Let those on this side get back over. I'll try to hold the Greeks here."

He dismounted most of his troops. He arranged the lancers six deep in a semicircle in front of the bridgehead, around the caterwauling peasants, with

lances outward. Along the river bank he posted the archers in two bodies, one on each flank, and beyond them his remaining lancers, mounted. If anything would hold Bloody John, that would.

The Imperialists stood for perhaps ten minutes.

Then a big body of Lombards and Gepids trotted out, cantered, galloped straight at his line of spears. Padway, standing afoot behind the line, watched them grow larger and larger. The sound of their hoofs was like that of a huge orchestra of kettledrums, louder and louder. Watching these big, long-haired barbarians loom up out of the dust their horses raised, Padway sympathized with the peasant recruits. If he hadn't had his pride and his responsibility, he'd have run himself until his legs gave out.

On came the Imperialists. They looked as though they could ride over any body of men on earth. Then the bowstrings began to snap. Here a horse reared or buckled; there a man fell off with a musical clash of scale-mail. The charge slowed perceptibly. But they came on. To Padway they looked twenty feet tall. And then they were right on the line of spears. Padway could see the spearmen's tight lips and white faces. If they held—

They did. The Imperialist horses reared, screaming, when the lancers pricked them. Some of them stopped so suddenly that their riders were pitched out of the saddle. And then the whole mass was streaming off to right and left, and back to the main army. It wasn't the horses' war, and they had no intention of spitting themselves on the unpleasant looking lances.

Padway drew his first real breath in almost a minute. He'd been lecturing his men to the effect that no cavalry could break a really solid line of spearmen, but he hadn't believed it himself until now.

Then an awful thing happened. A lot of his lancers, seeing the Imperialists in flight, broke away from the line and started after their foes on foot. Padway screeched at them to come back, but they kept on running, or rather trotting heavily in their armor. Like at Senlac, thought Padway. With similar results. The alert John sent a regiment of cuirassiers out after the clumsily running mob of Goths, and in a twinkling the Goths were scattering all over the field and being speared like so many boars. Padway raved with fury and chagrin; this was his first serious loss. He grabbed Tirdat by the collar, almost strangling him.

He shouted: "Find Gudareths! Tell him to round up a few hundred of those Italians! I'm going to put them in the line!"

Padway's line was now perilously thin, and he couldn't contract it without isolating his archers and horsemen. But this time John hurled his cavalry against the flanking archers. The archers dropped back down the river bank, where the horses couldn't get at them, and Padway's own cavalry charged the Imperialists, driving them off in a dusty chaos of whirling blades.

Presently the desired peasantry appeared, shepherded along by dirty and

profane Gothic officers. The bridge was carpeted with pikes dropped in flight; the recruits were armed with these and put in the front line. They filled the gap nicely. Just to encourage them, Padway posted Goths behind them, holding sword points against their kidneys.

Now, if Bloody John would let him alone for a while, he could set about the delicate operation of getting his whole force back across the bridge without exposing any part of it to slaughter.

But Bloody John had no such intention. On came, two big bodies of horse, aimed at the flanking Gothic cavalry.

Padway couldn't see what was happening, exactly, between the dust and the ranks of heads and shoulders in the way. But by the diminishing clatter he judged his men were being drawn off. Then came some cuirassiers galloping at the archers, forcing them off the top of the bank again. The cuirassiers strung their bows, and for a few seconds Goths and Imperialists twanged arrows at each other. Then the Goths began slipping off up and down the river, and swimming across.

Finally, on came the Gepids and Lombards, roaring like lions. This time there wouldn't be any arrow fire to slow them up. Bigger and bigger loomed the onrushing mass of longhaired giants on their huge horses, waving their huge axes.

Padway felt the way a violin string must the moment before it snaps.

There was a violent commotion in his own ranks right in front of him. The backs of the Goths were replaced by the brown faces of the peasants. These had dropped their pikes and clawed their way back through the ranks, sword points or no sword points. Padway had a glimpse of their popping eyes, their mouths gaping in screams of terror, and he was bowled over by the wave. They stepped all over him. He squirmed and kicked like a newt on a hook, wondering when the bare feet of the Italians would be succeeded by the hoofs of the hostile cavalry. The Italo-Gothic kingdom was done for, and all his work for nothing . . .

The pressure and the pounding let up. A battered Padway untangled himself from those who had tripped over him. His whole line had begun to give way, but then had been frozen in the act, staring—all but a Goth in front of him who was killing an Italian.

The Imperialist heavy cavalry was not to be seen. The dust was so thick that nothing much could be seen. From beyond the pall in front of Padway's position came tramplings and shoutings and clatterings.

"What's happened?" yelled Padway. Nobody answered. There was nothing to be seen in front of them but dust dust, dust. A couple of riderless horses ran dimly past them through it, seeming to drift by like fish in a muddy aquarium tank.

Then a man appeared, running on foot. As he slowed down and walked up to the line of spears, Padway saw that he was a Lombard.

While Padway was wondering if this was some lunatic out to. tackle his army single-handed, the man shouted: *"Armaio!* Mercy!" The Goths exchanged startled glances.

Then a couple of more barbarians appeared, one of them leading a horse. They yelled. *"Armaio, timrja!* Mercy, comrade! *Armaio frijond!* Mercy, friend!"

A plumed Imperial cuirassier rode up behind them, shouting in Latin: *"Amicus!"* Then appeared whole companies of Imperialists, horse and foot, German, Slav, Hun, and Anatolian mixed, bawling, "Mercy, friend!" in a score of languages.

A solid group of horsemen with a Gothic standard in their midst rode through the Imperialists. Padway recognized a tall, brown-bearded figure in their midst. He croaked: "Belisarius!"

The Thracian came up, leaned over, and shook hands. "Martinus! I didn't know you with all that dust on your face. I was afraid I'd be too late. We've been riding hard since dawn. We hit them in the rear, and that was all there was to it. We've got Bloody John, and your King Urias is safe. What shall we do with all these prisoners? There must be twenty or thirty thousand of them at least."

Padway rocked a little on his feet. "Oh, round them up and put them in a camp or something. I don't really care. I'm going to sleep on my feet in another minute."

CHAPTER XVIII

Back in Rome, Urias said slowly: "Yes, I see your point. Men won't fight for a government they have no stake in. But do you think we can afford to compensate all the loyal landlords whose serfs you propose to free?"

"We'll manage," said Padway. "It'll be over a period of years. And this new tax on slaves will help." Padway did not explain that he hoped, by gradually boosting the tax on slaves, to make slavery an altogether unprofitable institution. Such an idea would have been too bewilderingly radical for even Urias' flexible mind.

Urias continued: "I don't mind the limitations on the king's power in this new constitution of yours. For myself, that is. I'm a soldier, and I'm just as glad to leave the conduct of civil affairs to others. But I don't know about the Royal Council."

"They'll agree. I have them more or less eating out of my hand right now. I've shown them how without the telegraph we could never have kept such good track of Bloody John's movements, and without the printing press we could never have roused the serfs so effectively."

"What else is there?"

"We've got to write the kings of the Franks, explaining politely that it's not our fault if the Burgunds prefer our rule to theirs, but that we certainly don't propose to give them back to their Meroving majesties.

"We've also got to make arrangements with the king of Visgoths for fitting out our ships at Lisbon for their trip to the lands across the Atlantic. He's named you his successor, by the way, so when he dies the east and west Goths will be united again. Reminds me, I have to make a trip to Naples. The shipbuilder down there says he never saw such a crazy design as mine, which is for what we Americans would call a Grand Banks schooner. Procopius'll have to go with me, to discuss details of his history course at our new university."

"Why are you so set on this Atlantic expedition, Martinus?"

"I'll tell you. In my country we amused ourselves by sucking the smoke of a weed called tobacco. It's a fairly harmless little vice if you don't overdo it. Ever since I arrived here I've been wishing for some tobacco, and the land across the Atlantic is the nearest place you can get any."

Urias laughed his big, booming laughs. "I've got to be off. I'd like to see the draft of your letter to Justinian before you send it."

"Okay, as we say in America. I'll have it for you tomorrow, and also the appointment of Thomasus the Syrian as minister of finance for you to sign. He arranged to get those skilled ironworkers from Damascus through his private business connections, so I shan't have to ask Justinian for them."

Urias asked: "Are you sure your friend Thomasus is honest?"

"Sure he's honest. You just have to watch him. Give my regards to Mathaswentha. How is she?"

"She's fine. She's calmed down a lot since all the people she most feared have died, or gone mad. We're expecting a little Amaling, you know."

"I didn't know! Congratulations."

"Thanks. When are you going to find a girl, Martinus?"

Padway stretched and grinned. "Oh, just as soon as I catch up on my sleep."

Padway watched Urias go with a twinge of envy. He was at the age when bachelors get wistful about their friends' family life. Not that he wanted a repetition of his fiasco with Betty, or a stick of female dynamite like Mathaswentha. He hoped Urias would keep his queen pregnant practically from now on. It might keep her out of mischief.

Padway wrote:

> Urias, King of the Goths and Italians, to his Radiant Clemency Flavius Anicius Justinian, Emperor of the Romans, Greetings.
>
> Now that the army sent by your Serene Highness to Italy, under John, the nephew of Vitalianus, better known as Bloody John, is no longer an obstacle to our reconciliation, we resume discussion for terms for the honorable termination of the cruel and unprofitable war between us.
>
> The terms proposed in our previous letter stand, with this exception: Our previously asked indemnity of a hundred thousand solidi is doubled, to compensate our citizens for damages caused by Bloody John's invasion.
>
> There remains the question of the disposal of your general, Bloody John. Though we have never seriously contemplated the collection of Imperial generals as a hobby, your Serenity's actions have forced us into a policy that

looks much like it. As we do not wish to cause the Empire a serious loss, we shall release the said John on payment of a modest ransom of fifty thousand solidi.

We earnestly urge your Serenity to consider this course favorably. As you know, the Kingdom of Persia is ruled by King Khusrau, a young man of great force and ability. We have reason to believe that Khusrau will soon attempt another invasion of Syria. You will then need the ablest generals you can find.

Further, our slight ability to foresee the future informs us that in about thirty years there will be born in Arabia a man named Mohammed, who, preaching a heretical religion, will, unless stopped, instigate a great wave of barbarian conquest, subverting the rule both of the Persian Kingdom and the East Roman Empire. We respectfully urge the desirability of securing control of the Arabian Peninsula forthwith, that this calamity shall be stopped at the source.

Please accept this warning as evidence of our friendliest sentiments. We await the gracious favor of an early reply.

by MARTINUS PADUEI, Quaestor.

Padway leaned back and looked at the letter. There were other things to attend to: the threat of invasion of Noricum by the Bavarians, and the offer by the Khan of the Avars of an alliance to exterminate the Bulgarian Huns. The alliance would be courteously refused. The Avars would make no pleasanter neighbors than the Bulgars.

Let's see: There was a wandering fanatical monk who was kicking up another row about sorcery. Should he try to smother the man in cream, as by giving him a job? Better see the Bishop of Bologna first; if he had influence in that direction, Padway knew how to make use of it. And it was time he cottoned up to that old rascal Silverius . . .

And should he go on with his gunpowder experiments? Padway was not sure that this was desirable. The world had enough means of inflicting death and destruction already. On the other hand his own interests were tied up with those of the Italo-Gothic State, which must therefore be saved at all costs . . .

To hell with it, thought Padway. He swept all the papers into a drawer in his desk, took his hat off the peg, and got his horse. He set out for Anicius' house. How could he expect to cut any ice with Dorothea if he didn't even look her up for days after his return to Rome?

Dorothea came out to meet him. He thought how pretty she was.

But there was nothing of hail-the-conquering-hero about her manner.

Before he could get a word out, she began: "You beast! You slimy thing! We befriended you, and you ruin us! My poor old father's heart is broken! And now you've come around to gloat, I suppose!"

"What?"

"Don't pretend you don't know! I know all about that illegal order you issued, freeing the serfs on our estates in Campania. They burned our house, and stole the things I've kept since I was a little girl—" She began to weep.

Padway tried to say something sympathetic, but she flared up again. "Get out! I never want to see you again! It'll take a squad of your barbarian soldiers to get you into our house. *Get out!*"

Padway got, slowly and dispiritedly. It was a complex world. Almost anything you did was bound to hurt somebody.

Then his back straightened. It was nothing to feel sorry for oneself about. Dorothea was a nice girl, yes, pretty, and reasonably bright. But she was not extraordinary in these respects; there were plenty of others equally attractive. To be frank, Dorothea was a pretty average young woman. And being Italian, she'd probably be fat at thirty-five.

Government compensation for their losses would do a lot to mend the broken hearts of the Anicii. If they tried to apologize for treating him roughly, he'd be polite and all, but he didn't think he'd go back.

Girls were okay, and he'd probably fall one of these days. But he had more important things to worry over. His success so far in the business of civilization outweighed any little failures in personal relationship.

His job wasn't over. It never would be—until disease or old age or the dagger of some local enemy ended it. There was so much to do, and only a few decades to do it in; compasses and steam engines and microscopes and the writ of habeas corpus.

He'd teetered along for over a year and a half, grabbing a little power here, placating a possible enemy there, keeping far enough out of the bad graces of the various churches, starting some little art such as spinning of sheet copper. Not bad for Mouse Padway! Maybe he could keep it up for years.

And if he couldn't—if enough people finally got fed up with the innovations of Mysterious Martinus—well, there was a semaphore telegraph system running the length and breadth of Italy, some day to be replaced by a true electric telegraph, if he could find time for the necessary experiments. There was a public letter post about to be set up. There were presses in Florence and Rome and Naples pouring out books and pamphlets and newspapers. Whatever happened to him, these things would go on. They'd become too well rooted to be destroyed by accident.

History had, without question, been changed.

Darkness would not fall.

Kaziranga, Assam

This armored, stone-gray Ktesias' unicorn
    Ears pricked, amid a marshy meadow stands,
    Feet sunk in ooze, hide folded into bands,
With puzzled, piggy eyes and nasal horn.
At elephants with tourists on their backs
    He stares unblinking, like a beast of slate;
    Then with a mighty-muscled, bouncing gait,
He turns unhurriedly and makes his tracks.

Away he trots and crashes through the canes.
    The cameras click; the elephants plod on
        In search of more primeval wildlife scenes.
If that rhinoceros were blessed with brains,
    Do you suppose he'd think of ages gone
        When of the earth his kind were kings and queens?

The Isolinguals

Nick looked at the cop, and the cop looked at Nick. The fruit vendor's friendly smile suddenly froze. The cop didn't know it, but something had gone *ping* inside Nick's head. He wasn't Niccolo Franchetti any longer. He was Decimus Agricola, engineering officer of the good old XXXIInd Legion. He had been standing behind his ballista, laying it for the Parthians' next charge. Of the crew, only he and two privates had not been struck down by the Asiatics' terrible arrows.

Then something awful had happened: the vast red rock desert of Mesopotamia had vanished, and with it the swirling masses of hostile cavalry, the heaps of dead and wounded, and everything else. One of the ballista crew was gone likewise; the other had metamorphosed into this fat fellow in the tight clothes. His catapult had, in the same twinkling, become a little two-wheeled wagon piled with fruit. He was standing on a paved street, lined with buildings of fantastic height.

Decimus blinked incredulously. Sorcery! Those Parthians were said to be good at it. The man looking at him *must* be Cartoricus, the Gaulish replacement. *"Onere!"* he shouted, "Load!"

The man in dark blue just stared. Decimus lost his temper, "What's the matter, don't you understand good Latin? They'll be at us again in a minute!" The man did nothing. Decimus felt for his sword. It wasn't there. He was wearing queer, uncomfortable clothes like the other. He snatched an apple; at the touch of it his mind reeled. It felt like a real apple, not a sorcerer's illusion. He bit into it. Then stark terror seized him. He threw the apple at the fat man and started to run.

Arthur Lindsley picked up the hand set. "Hello? . . . Oh, it's you, Pierre. How's the esteemed son-in-law this morning?"

"Fairish," replied the instrument. "I'm up at Rockefeller Med. Bill Jenkins has a case that might interest you. None of their high-powered psychiatrists have been able to do a thing with it. Want to come up?"

Lindsley looked at his watch. "Let's see—my elementary biology class lets out at two thirty. I can come up then."

"Fine. And could you round up a couple of good linguists and bring 'em along?"

"Huh? What for?"

"Take too long to explain over the phone. Can you bring them?"

"Well, there's Van Vyck over at Barnard, and Squier's office is down the hall. Say, are you and Elsa going to have Christmas dinner with us?"

"Sorry, but we promised my folks to have it with them: this year. Yeah, we're taking the train for Quebec next Thursday. Thanks anyway. Now please bring some really good language sharks. It might be important."

Professor Lindsley sighed as he hung up. He didn't look forward with much pleasure to the undiluted company of his two sons all day Christmas. Hugh would talk interminably about the vacuum-cleaner business. Malcolm would drape himself over the furniture and make languid remarks in his newly acquired college voice about how art is all. What did Pierre mean by dragging Elsa off to spend Christmas with his Canuck parents? They were the only intelligent members of the family, besides himself.

Lindsley took the new Tenth Avenue Subway up to the Medical Center, with his two linguists in tow. Squier had been in, but not Van Wyck. A search of the language department had unearthed a Dr. Fedor Jevsky, who said he'd be ver-r-ry glad to come. Lindsley was a smallish man, very erect, with snapping eyes and a diminutive white beard. He looked odd, leading the rangy Squier and the obese Jevsky like a couple of puppies.

Dr. Jenkins' office was jammed. The thickset, shabby man was speaking: "It's just like I told the guys down at the hospital, doc; Mrs. Garfinkle and I been married ten years, and she never showed no symptoms or nothin'. We're just poor woiking people—"

Jenkins' bedside voice suddenly recovered its normal snap; "Come in, Arthur; I take it these are your linguists. I've got a queer job for them."

Pierre Lamarque's broad, coppery face grinned at his father-in-law from across the room. Jenkins was explaining: "—and all at once her normal personality went out like a light. She began talking this gibberish, and didn't know her husband or the city or anything else. That's just the trouble; we can't locate a single physical paranoiac symptom, and aphasia won't work either. Split personality, yes, but it doesn't explain her making up what seems to be a whole new language of her own. But that's not all. She's the third of these cases the hospital has received in twenty-four hours. Sure, naturally we gave 'em all the routine tests."

The telephone rang. "Yes? Oh, Lord! . . . Yes . . . No . . . Glad you let me know." Jenkins hung up. "Twelve more cases; Seems to be an epidemic."

Jevsky had inclined his globular form—it was impossible for him to bend—in front of the plain-looking woman on the chair. She seemed to be so ear-

nestly trying to tell him something with that rush of strange syllables. He suddenly seemed to catch something, for he barked at her what sounded like "Haybye-ded-yow?"

The rush of sound stopped, and the woman's face broke into a grateful smile. Then the torrent began again.

Jevsky wasn't listening. He spoke to Jenkins, "What foreign languages has Meesez Garfinkle studied?"

"None at all; she was born in New York City; both parents spoke English, at least of a sort; she left school at the end of the eighth grade. What do you think you've got, Dr. Jevsky?"

"I'm not sure, but it might be Gothic."

"What!"

The vast shoulders shrugged. "I know it sounds crazy, but *habai-dedjau* means 'if I had' in Gothic. I don't really know the language, except for a few fragments like that; nor, I theenk, will many of my colleagues. You, Dr. Squier?"

The other linguist shook his head. "The Celtic languages are my specialty. But I suppose there's at least one Gothic scholar in New York City. There's at least one of everything else."

Jenkins shook *his* head. "No, gentlemen, it's hardly worth trying to dig one up on such a fantastic hypothesis. Guess we have a new form of dementia here. Sorry I hauled you up; she acted so rational, that I thought you might find something. By the way, what *is* Gothic?"

Squier answered: "The language of the ancient Goths; it's more or less the common ancestor of English, Dutch, and German. A complicated affair with about nine thousand useless inflections. We have only a partial knowledge of it."

The telephone rang again. When Jenkins had hung up, he swore. "More cases. They're coming in regularly now. They've got one who seems to be talking some kind of English dialect, and they're bringing, him up here. Suppose you all stick around for a while."

They stood or sat on the floor. Lindsley argued with one of the Rockefeller psychiatrists about politics. The biologist thought Slidell and his so-called Union Party were a real menace, that they were aiming for a dictatorship and were pretty good shots. The psychiatrist didn't; he admitted that Slidell was a fanatical demagogue and all that, but said that if the other parties would stop trying to cut each other's throats they could squash the would-be dictator overnight.

At last the hospital men brought in a slim, blond youth with a harassed expression. Jenkins rose. "I understand you're—"

The young man interrupted. He spoke a peculiar English, rather like a strong Irish brogue. "If thou're going to ask me who I be, like the rest of these knaves, my name is Sergeant Ronald Blake, of the theerd company of Noll Croomle's foot, and a mor-r-rtal enemy of ahl Papists! Now are ye satisfied?"

Squier said, "Whose foot? I mean, how do you spell him?"

The youth frowned. "I'm no clerk, but I bethink me 'tis C-r-o-m-w-e-l-l, Croomle."

Lindsley spoke up, "What year is it?"

"Certainly, 'tis the year of our Lord sixteen forty-eight."

The scientists looked at one another.

Jenkins said, "We seem to be getting somewhere, but I'm not sure just where. Young man, suppose you tell us just what happened."

"Well, I had gone home on leave, and my wife asked me to go down to the butcher's, and I had just toorned on the main street o' the village when I spied my old friend Hawks.

" 'Hoy, Ronald,' he says, 'how's the brave soldyer lad? And is't true thou wert at Naseby?' So I began to tell him ahl about the great battle, and how at the end the Cavaliers fled like rabbits, with their long hair streamin' out behind—" The voice from the past, if such it was, rolled on and on. Sergeant Blake was evidently a man who believed in getting in all the details.

Later, Lindsley and his son-in-law sat in the former's office. Tobacco smoke crawled bluely up through the rays of the desk lamp.

"Something's gone haywire," said the professor. "I can't believe this is an ordinary form of insanity, or any extraordinary form, either. How can you explain how Mike Watrous, package dispatcher at a department store, a young man of little learning and few talents, not only gets the idea that he's a sergeant in the Parliamentary army in the English Civil War, but also acquires a complete biography, personality, and accent to go with it? How many literate people, let alone those of Mike's background and tastes, know that Oliver Cromwell pronounced his name 'Croomle'? In most cases of this kind the victim thinks he's Napoleon or Julius Caesar, but after the delusion has come on he doesn't know any more about Napoleon or Caesar, really, than he did before."

Lamarque shrugged. "Any other hypothesis I can think or seems equally crazy, unless you're going to admit the transmigration of souls, or some such nonsense. Suppose I caught this disease, or whatever it is, and thought I was the first Lamarque, who came over to Canada in 1746, or thereabouts. I wouldn't. have the vaguest idea of how to go about talking eighteenth-century French."

Lindsley sighed. "And now they want us to drop everything we're doing and try to help them out. I wish they made these psychiatrists—and that includes our friend Jenkins—learn enough advanced biology so they wouldn't come running to us when they get stumped. But I suppose we'll have to go through the motions, anyway. The worst of it is that I haven't the foggiest notion of where to start."

Hans Rumpel was making a speech. He was in fine form. His Yorktown audience drank in his flood of words, his piercing yells, his windmill gestures. "Red plot. . . . Jewish assassins. . . . Destruction of civilization—" he screeched.

Hans faltered; his oratory died away to a mumble. His audience was mildly surprised to see him going through the motions of stroking an imaginary beard. Then his voice rose again, this time not in English, but in mournful Hebrew. He was, in fact, reciting a Hebrew service, just as he—not Hans Rumpel, but Leviben Eliezar, a respected rabbi of the Hasidim, had been reciting it in a Krakow synagogue, in the year 1784. The would-be saviors of civilization from the horrors of democratic government looked at one another. Was he another of those cases they had been reading about? Hans stopped his chant, gaped at his audience, and fell on his knees. He was praying with mountain-moving fervor—

Professor Lindsley emerged from behind the tarn of books and papers and threw his eye shade in the corner. "Pierre! Let's cut this damn nonsense and get some breakfast. It's seven o'clock."

Lamarque appeared. "Any luck? None here, either. Can't find anything definite, though Minakuchi's paper on ancestral memory in rats might be worth following up."

Lindsley frowned. "Something you said the day before yesterday gave me an idea, but it popped out of my mind like a watermelon seed, before I could grab it. I've been trying to think of it ever since. Must be getting old."

Later, Lamarque made a face. "With all the advances in our modern civilization, nobody has yet found how to make a drug store serve good coffee. Oh, remind me to wire Quebec and tell the folks the Christmas dinner is off. What's the latest from Jenkins?"

"More of the same. At the present rate every hospital in New York will be full in a couple of days, and all the medicos in town are running around in circles, and the psychiatrists are just dithering. Bill says they're fairly sure it isn't infectious, from what case histories they've been able to trace. And *we* aren't any further than when we started—"

Sunday, in the new church on Tremont Avenue, the Bronx, H. Perkins rolled his eyes around so that he could see the congregation. Pretty miserable showing. Why had the vestry wanted to build this church, anyway? He'd heard a lot about the "return to religion" since 1950, but they didn't seem to be returning to *his* denomination. Such a worried-looking lot, too! Between the threat of a dictatorship by that bellowing mounteback, Slidell, and the strange plague of insanity, he didn't wonder. What would happen if Slidell got in?

H. Perkins passed down the aisle with his most seraphic expression. The 'plate'—a most unplatelike object, when you thought of it—was coming toward him again, giving forth a pleasant clink as each coin went into it. He reached over and took it from Mrs. Dinwiddie—and it was as though meek H. Perkins had never been. He, Joshua Hardy, had been standing on a heaving

deck yelling to the verminous crew the commands from "Old Pegleg." They'd just sighted a Spaniard, and were cracking on sail to have a closer look. Might be the monthly treasure ship from Colon. And here he was, in the aisle of a church, surrounded by people in strange clothes, and holding a little velvet bag with two dark wood handles.

Josh was too impulsive to make a really top-notch pirate. He shook the bag; to his ears came that sweetest of sounds, the clink of com. Better grab the loot and run, boys. "Avast, ye lubbers," he roared. "*Give* me that!" He snatched the other little bag. "Ho, you over there, stand and deliver! *Where* in fifteen thousand bloody hells is my cutlass?" He raced down the aisle to cut off the fellow with the remaining bag. Too late! The chase pounded out into the street—

Professor Lindsley slammed down his brief case. "I'm about ready to give up and go in for the transmigration of souls after all," he said wrathfully to Lamarque, who was peering into a microscope. On the microscope slide was a bit of nerve tissue of one of the cases who had gotten himself killed by an automobile.

Lindsley continued: "They're going to start a camp for new cases, as every institution for miles around is full. The roads leading out of New York are jammed; people are leaving. Glad we sent our women folks off to Quebec while you could still buy transportation. A driver of a Madison Avenue bus had a seizure and ran his bus into a hydrant between Fifty-third and Fifty-fourth Streets. What's new around here?"

"If you mean research, nothing. But the first case in the university faculty has happened."

"Huh? Tell me about it, quick!"

"It was in the lunchroom. You know Calderwood, the mathematician? As sane and sober a man as you'll find. Well, at lunch today he jumped up with a howl and began throwing things. Then he got into the kitchen and chased everybody out with a carving knife.

"But the best part happened next. Some of them watched him around a corner. He marched into the dining room, took off his pants, pulled a tablecloth off one of the tables, and wound it around his waist like a skirt. Then he stuck the knife through one of his garters.

"He must have been a sketch. Wish I'd been there to see. He strutted up and down for a while, apparently challenging the people, in his own lingo, to come back and fight.

"Well, our friend Squier heard the fuss and came up. Squier had a bright idea. He talked Gaelic to Calderwood, and he calmed down right away. Seems he wasn't Graham Calderwood any more, but the terrible Gavin MacTaggart,

a wild Highlander looking for a MacDonald throat to cut. If he couldn't have a MacDonald, a Gordon would do. They got him rounded up eventually."

Lindsley took off his glasses and rubbed his red-rimmed eyes. "You're an unfeeling young devil. How'd you like to be a member of poor Graham's family? Did you see about my classes?"

"Yeah. One of your students in advanced biology is down too! Arne Holmgren. Know him? He thinks he's a Viking. When they took him away he was roaring some early Scandinavian battle-song; at least, that's what I suppose it was. Say, hadn't you better get some sleep? You can't work efficiently if you don't, you know."

Lindsley started to snap back an irritated reply, but checked himself. "Maybe you're right, Pierre. When my normally saintly disposition starts to go sour there's something wrong. If anybody phones, tell 'em you don't know when I'll be back."

Chase Burge lay on his back with his eyes closed, enjoying, the last moment of his doze. His conscience, which woke up a little more slowly than the rest of him, showed signs of stirring. He shouldn't have lost his temper yesterday in that argument. But, damn it, Hobart was *so* rabid on the subject.

Then he sat up suddenly, the last vapors of sleep gone from his brain. How had he gotten into this strange room? He'd gone to bed perfectly sober. He'd been snatched! He sprang from the bed.

The door opened and a man in a dressing gown walked *into* the room. Chase tensed himself to spring; but, no, the man might have a gun. Better find out what it was all about.

"Morning, son," said the kidnaper. "I think one of my shirts strayed into your bureau—"

"Where am I?" snarled Chase.

"Where— Oh, my Lord—" The gray-haired man looked at him with a horrified expression. "You've got it, too!"

"Got what? What did you kidnap me for? My folks haven't any dough to speak of!"

The other man composed himself with an effort. "Who do you think you are? No, I mean that as a serious question."

"I'm Chase Burge, of 351 West 55th Street, and I demonstrate automobiles for a living. Who are *you?*"

"I'm Chase Burge. Senior, that is. You're Chase Burge, Junior, and I'm your father."

"No, you're not. My father's dead, and he didn't look like you anyway. Is this a funny way of adopting me, or what?"

Chase Burge, Senior, sat down with a perplexed expression. "Let me explain. You just think you're me. But you're really me—no, I mean you're you.

You're your own son, really; that is, you're the son of the man you think you are, but who is really me. Oh dear, I wish I could explain! It's this way: you're suffering a delusion that you're your own father—"

Chase interrupted. "You sound like something out of Gilbert and Sullivan. If anybody has delusions around here it's—uk!" His hand had touched his chin. In a flash he was at the mirror.

"Holy Moses, where did I get this D'Artagnan effect? Have I been unconscious long?"

"Why, you've been wearing that goatee for five years. Lots of the young men wear them."

Chase Burge, Junior, began to laugh hysterically. "Oh, Lord, I guess I am crazy! I know; this is a looney bin that I've been shut up in. I'm crazy, and so are you, unless you're one of the keepers."

Pierre Lamarque threw down his brief case. "I think I have something, but I'm not sure."

"Let's have it, quick!" barked Lindsley.

"Let me begin at the beginning. I was down at the hospital looking over the new cases. They had one who they said was an Englishman of about 1300. I couldn't understand him at all, never realized how fast the language changes. He told us we were a 'pock of foals,' which didn't make much sense, until a professor told me it meant 'pack of fools.'

"But the prize exhibit was one of the new cases from out of town—a Mrs. Rhodes of White Plains. They told me she was—or had been—one of the outstanding uplifters of her community; during the revival of prohibition agitation twelve years ago she was one of the leading lights in the movement.

"Well, you ought to *see* her now! She chatters in Renaissance Italian, and slinks around with a snaky glide you wouldn't believe possible for a lady prohibitionist in her forties. She'd made a dead set for all the doctors in the place, until they're scared to be alone with her. Says she's Elenadella Colleom.

"That gave me an idea, so I stopped in at the library, and found that there really was such a person as Elena della Ii Colleoru." Lamarque grinned wickedly. "She was a notorious strumpet at the court of Cesare Borgia."

Lindsley polished his glasses slowly. Lamarque knew that meant an idea coming, and kept still.

"I think I begin to see," said the older biologist. "First, the cases, when we catch them, all act scared to death, but otherwise perfectly sane, except that they've acquired the personality of some one, real or imaginary, who lived before them."

"Secondly, the pseudopsyche is always an individual who might conceivably have been the case's direct ancestor, as in the case of the redcap over in the Jersey Heights Terminal who thought he was a Zulu warrior and tried to use a

traveler's umbrella as an assegai. Sometimes the descent would be difficult to trace, as in the case of Mrs. Rhodes-Colleoni, but you go back enough generations and you could be almost anybody's descendant. In one case—that of the young man who thought he was his own father—we know the phylogenic relationship of the case and its pseudopsyche for a fact.

"Thirdly, in at least some cases, and conceivably in all, the pseudopsyche corresponds to a person who really lived."

"But," objected Lamarque, "if they are real, how come the fact hasn't been noted before this?"

"Hm-m-m. Well, consider the ratio between the total number of people who've lived in the last couple of millennia and the number who were prominent enough to leave a historical record of their doings. You'll see how small the chances are of turning up any big shots.

"Fourthly, the average age of the pseudopsyche *is* around thirty. That doesn't prove anything by itself. Jerry Plotnik's revising the average to include the latest data now. But the age figures are much too closely grouped for a random distribution: no children, and hardly any elderly people.

"Now suppose—just suppose—that the pseudopsyche is a *piece* of ancestral memory that's gotten carried along in the germ cells, like a piece of ultramicroscopic motion-picture film, and suppose that something happens to substitute this carried-over memory for the case's real one. You'd think you're the ancestor whose memory you've been carrying around. For obvious reasons. It would end at a point *before* the time when the said ancestor's child from whom you're descended was conceived. Suppose we call the phenomenon genotropism. That's not a very good name, but it'll do until I think of a better one."

Lamarque whistled. "I hope if it happens to me that I'll be one of my French ancestors and not one of my aboriginal ones; I might be sort of unmanageable as an Ojibway Indian. But say, won't this knock Weismann's theory into a cocked hat?"

"If it's correct, it'll do worse than that. I'll have to eat what *I've* been saying for thirty years about Lamarkism's being a zombie among evolutionary theories. But remember, this idea of ours is still just an idea, and we haven't any positive evidence whatever yet. More than one scientist has been caught because he assumed that because a theory of his *might* account for certain facts, it therefore *was* the explanation."

"Uh-huh, I get you. But now that we have your theory, what are we going to do with it?"

"Damned if I know," said Lindsley, reaching for his pipe.

The manager of the Venus looked gloomily at his audience, if you could call it that. Everybody who could scrape up the price of a fare was trying to get out of town, and the rest weren't spending much on entertainment. You didn't feel

safe on the streets any more. Still, burlesque was holding up better than any other form of entertainment; a lot of the *movie* places had closed. Then, too; a merciful providence had decreed that two of the Venus's biggest creditors should come down with the plague.

Betty Fiorelli was working up to the climax of her strip tease. A few more grinds and bumps, and more clothing had gone into the wings. He'd told her to give 'em the works. The cops weren't likely to send an inspector around at a time like this. A faint "Ah-h-h!" from the audience. But what was the girl up to? Instead of sidling coyly into the wings, she was standing squarely facing the audience, and her rich voice rolled out in verse after sonorous verse of classic Greek, which was just that to her hearers.

Three minutes later the few strollers on 42nd Street gaped incredulously at the sight of a tall and well-made young woman, clad-precisely in a pair of high-heeled shoes, speeding like an arrow along the sidewalk, while after her panted the manager of the Venus and three stage hands.

They knew not that they pursued, not Betty Fiorelli, but Thea Tisimides, the great poetess of Lemnos, whose contemporaries (of the Fifth Century B.C.) thought she surpassed even Sappho.

The fishy-eyed man was talking earnestly to Professor Lindsley: "O.K., but I think you scientific guys are nuts for not getting out while the getting's good. You can stay until we pull out the inner police cordon, and then you go. There's no use keeping the cordon there when the gangs of iso-isolinguals have begun turning up all over New Joisey and Westchester. What does 'isolingual' mean, anyway?"

"It means they speak the same language. You can see how it is. A case speaks Anglo-Saxon, say. He wanders around until he runs into somebody else who speaks Anglo-Saxon, and they join up for purposes of offense and defense. Pretty soon you have a gang. Come in, Jerry. Dr. Plotnik, Detective Inspector Monahan. Dr. Plotnik's been helping us with the mathematical side of our research."

"You mean he's one of these lightning calculators?"

"Whoop! You'll insult him. He's a mathematical genius, which is something else."

The detective applied another match to his cigar. "Something's fishy about this whole business."

Plotnik gave a sort of gurgle. "You're telling us?"

"No, sonny, I didn't just mean the disease. The National Patriots have been showing all kinds of activity. We've been getting reports from the police all over the country. A lot of them have been filtering into New York, when everybody else is trying to get out. We've caught a few trying to get through the cordons. And the big bug who owns 'em, Slidell, has disappeared."

"What!" exclaimed Lindsley.

"Yeah. You ain't read about it in the papers, because they all been too busy with the plague. But it looks to *me*—it almost looks—as if there might be a human origin to it."

"But how?" Plotnik stopped.

"I dunno. Maybe they poisoned the water. Thought I'd take a little run down below the cordon and see if we couldn't catch one of these tough babies that Slidel's been sending around to beat up people he don't like. Maybe we could find out why they ain't afraid of the plague. Like to come along?"

Plotnik stood up, almost upsetting his chair. "You get Pierre Lamarque to go instead of me; I just had an idea that'll take a little time to work out."

Snowflakes glided slantwise out of a gray January sky. "Better park here," said the detective, as Lindsley swung his car off Broadway at 72nd Street. "Won't do to go too far downtown. Look, there's another!"

Lindsley and Lamarque peered through the windows, and saw a hurrying figure slip into a doorway. There was something odd about the figure.

Lamarque spoke: "He's wearing a football helmet!"

"Huh?" said the detective, blinking. "Well, anyways, we're gonna take a closer look at his fancy headpiece. Got your guns, you two?" He slid out of the car, skidded a little on the snow, and steadied himself.

"Town's sure gonna get buried in snow, with nobody to remove it. Keep your eyes peeled for the isos."

The three marched abreast along the deserted street. Professor Lindsley almost stumbled over a body, half buried in the snow. He recognized a State trooper's uniform. He looked about, squinting against the snowflakes, and realized that the half dozen other darkish humps in the snow were also corpses. "Say, Monahan—"

"Sh-h! Want our friend to hear you? Now, Professor Lamarque, you stand on this side of the doorway and tackle him in the legs when he comes out. I'll do the rest."

Lamarque had given up trying to explain that he wasn't a full professor. Moreover, unless something was done about the plague soon, it looked as though he never would be a full professor. The university buildings were deserted save for a few dauntless scientists still trying to get at the cause and cure of the affliction.

"Remember," Monahan was whispering, "the foist guy that shows a sign of going nutty, one of the others tap's him on the head, but gentlelike, see? We don't want no fractured skulls." He flipped his blackjack up and down to illustrate "gentlelike."

The black outline of a man, weaving slowly along the sidewalk, materialized out of the snowflakes. He came up to the ambuscade, saying something in a pleading whine.

"Naw, scram, you!" hissed the detective, flipping his blackjack suggestively.

The man scrammed.

Lindsley looked nervously up and down the street, and at the two younger men beside the doorway, Damn it, he'd been a fool to come! Guerrilla warfare was no occupation for a sixty-year-old biology professor. He'd partly brought it on himself, by being the only man to present a plausible theory to the authorities—well, at least as plausible as any others. With New York City practically lost to civilized control they'd have listened to anybody. At the present rate, in another month New England and the Middle Atlantic States would be a wilderness, inhabited solely by roving bands of isolinguals who battled each other with clubs, rocks, and the loot of hardware stores.

Suppose some of them came along now? Thinking that they had been translated by magic into a strange and terrifying world, they were as dangerous as wild beasts. Lindsley wondered what it was like to shoot a man. And then the door opened and the man in the football helmet carne out.

Lamarque tackled the fellow neatly below the knees. He got out one yell before the detective was all over him, kneeling on his ribs and stuffing snow in his mouth. Then Monahan yanked off the helmet and slapped the man's skull with his blackjack.

"Come on!" he snapped, getting up and dragging the body by the coat collar toward the car.

A cluster of figures loomed out of the semidarkness. Lindsley counted six—no, seven, and felt in his pocket for the pistol. The seven just stared. Monahan brought out *his* pistol. The seven gave back apprehensively. Evidently they'd had painful experience—perhaps in the Battle of Herald Square, when a National Guard detachment and a troop of Srate police had scattered a horde of embattled isolinguals, only, to be seized themselves, many of them, and start killing each other.

One or the seven spoke up in what sounded like a Slavonic tongue. The detective tried to smile sweetly. "Can't understand you," he said, wagging his head. The leader's sigh was audible above the hiss of the falling flakes, and the seven trudged off.

The detectives stuffed their captive into the car. Lindsley let in the clutch slowly; the right rear wheel spun a few revolutions and then gripped the snow.

Monahan yelled in his ear, "Step on it, doc!"

Lindsley jumped and tried to comply. In the mirror he had a glimpse of people swarming out of the doorway. A sub machine gun crackled; a hole the diameter of a finger appeared in the windshield, surrounded by a spider web of cracks. Lindsley heard a gasp from the captive, and a stream of profanity from Monahan. "They got our prisoner, the—"

The car slithered around the corner of West End and 72nd. "Damn good thing this wasn't an old front-engined car," the rasping voice continued. "They'd

have let daylight into us sure. Bet the rear end looks like a gravel sizer. Take it easy, doc; they can't *see* to shoot more'n a block or two."

Later Monahan said, "Nope, the stiff didn't have no papers on him, but I still think he's a National Patriot. How you coming along with those helmets?"

"All finished," replied Lindsley. "I've been standing over the analysts with a club for twenty-four hours. The shielding inside the helmet was a lead-bismuth-antimony alloy, with traces of platinum and two of the rare metals. My son-in-law's gone out to wire the specifications to Albany and Washington."

"Hope it ain't too late. We better clear out to-night, before any more of us come down with the plague."

"There's still one telephone wire open," continued Lindsley. "And the man I was talking to told me the first case has been reported from San Francisco. A scrub lady started doing a hula. Must be a Polynesian sailor in her family tree somewhere. I—ah—" The voice trailed off. Professor Arthur Lindsley was asleep.

A lurch and the clash of metal on metal awoke him. "Hey, what—"

The detective's heroic cursing left off. "You hurt? Guess we're all right. Hey, Joe, where the hell are we? Poughkeepsie? We're on our way to Albany, professor, or rather we *was* on our way before the truck pushed us into this here lamppost. Guess it was a case driving, from the way he weaved. Maybe I should'a tried to hunt up a plane."

Lamarque's voice carne out of the dark: "Looks as if there's been another battle, from the corpses scattered around. Will that left door still open? Say, Monahan, don't you ever sleep?"

"Yeah, I grab a little now and then. Come on."

The drug store's shattered front gaped at them with a defeated air. Inside, the detective's flashlight dug a pallid clerk out from behind the soda fountain. "Don't shoot, please!" he quavered. "You're not isolinguals? A gang of 'em took over the town yesterday, and then this evening a bigger gang came along and drove 'em out. I thought they'd all gone and came down to open up shop, but some more came along just now. Look, quick, there they are again!"

"Stand back there!" roared Monahan. The figure in the doorway shouted something back, and the detective's pistol went off.

"Quick, you guys, pile the—" But the two scientists and the other cop were already furiously building a barricade of chairs and tables. A few stones sailed past their heads and made beautiful crashes among the glassware.

Lindsley peered aver the top of the upturned table. A figure, wild in the moonlight, rose from the sidewalk and raised a length of pipe or something. Lindsley fumbled for his pistol. Where the devil was the safety catch on the thing? He pulled the trigger. As his senses cleared after the flash and report, he saw that the figure was still there. He gripped the gun in both hands and tried again. The figure doubled over and went-*fthupl* in the slush.

Hours later Lamarque wiped his mouth an his sleeve. "If I drink another malted milk I'll get indigestion. What else have you, Mr. Bloom?"

"Sorry, sir, but the isos cleaned out all the pies and bread and things. And the gas is shut off, so I can't make any coffee. It'll have to be sodas or nothing, unless you want to try some cough drops."

"Ugh! Any luck on the phone, Joe?"

"Nope. Unless somebody finds us by dark it'll be just tough. They're waiting for that to rush us."

Unless somebody found them—There wouldn't be any street lights to shoot by. And four pistols wouldn't stop the horde of isolinguals waiting out of sight around the corners.

Darkness—no moon this time. The voices of the isos wafted into the drug store. The leaders were evidently haranguing their men. Then there was a full-throated yell, and the slapping of many feet in the slush. Bloom, the clerk, was carefully setting a row of bottles on the floor to use as missiles. If you didn't have a gun you had to use something.

Lamarque's pistol cracked. "Got one!"

Then the fusillade. But they came on in a solid mass. Lindsley thought, "These are really good, honest citizens I'm shooting, except for their malady." He realized that he had been squeezing the trigger of an empty gun. How the devil did you load the things? He'd never get it figured out before they swarmed in and finished them off. They were almost in the drug store now—

Manahan stopped his target practice to say, "Now why the hell are they all running one way? What's that noise? If it's a machine gun, boy, we're saved!"

Lindsley never imagined he'd find that implacable hammering the sweetest of sounds. The armored car skidded to a stop, and two football-helmeted soldiers jumped out.

Monahan turned to Lamarque. "What's that? Sorry, but I didn't get you. What? *Hey!*" He flung his arms around the young biologist in a bearlike hug. "Soldier! You got any more helmets?"

Lamarque's muttering rose to a frenzied shriek.

"Yeah, they're in the truck."

"*What* truck?"

"They were right behind us; ought to be along any, Yeah, here they came."

"Well, get one, quick! This guy's gone screwy like the others."

When the helmet had been forced on Lamarque's unwilling head, Monahan rubbed his shins. "Lord, professor, I didn't know you was that strong. I guess the guy you toined into never loined no Queensbury rules or nothing. But you shouldn't have tried to bite me."

Lamarque was acutely embarrassed. "I—I'm sorry. You know I haven't any recollection of the past few minutes at all, up to the time you put the helmet on me—"

"'S all right; it wasn't your fault. Now let's find some of the isos we winged and put helmets on them . . ."

Forty-eight hours later, Lindsley rubbed his eyes. "What do you mean by waking me up at this time of day, you young scoundrel. Oh, the paper. What's the news, quick?"

Lamarque seated himself on the bed with his slightly satanic grin. "You guessed right. They sent the army down to surround the area we figured the radiations were coming from, or rather that Plotnik figured they were coming from by finding the mass center of the locations of the cases reported. They were all wearing our cute little helmets, so the radiations didn't affect them.

"When they closed in and started searching houses they rounded up several thousand National Patriots. There was a little shooting, but most of the N.P.'s surrendered quietly enough when they saw what they were up against.

"The military located the cause of the whole works in an old house on Christopher Street. The place was full of radio apparatus from cellar to roof. They found Slidell himself, and his master mind, a Dr. Falk, whom nobody ever heard of, but who modestly describes himself as the greatest scientist of the age. Maybe he's right."

"This Falk got scared when he saw bayonets pointed at his stomach, and let out the whole story. Seems he found a complicated combination of harmonics on a long radio wave that would work this ancestral-memory switch, and he and Slidell figured to disorganize the whole country with it. And when his broadcasting set was turned off and everybody became himself again, we'd find Slidell installed as dictator and the N.P.'s running everything. Of course, in the meantime they'd be wearing the helmets and would be shielded from the radiations.

"The army turned the thing off right away, and all our medieval knights and yeomen are now ordinary citizens, busy picking up the pieces. Slidell, of course, made a speech. Too bad there wasn't a stenographer there to record it. I suppose he and Falk will be shot for murder, treason, and every other crime on the books, though I think they could plead insanity with some justice.

"Oh, yes, you're now the head of the department, and I'm a full professor. Also, we're famous, and are about to be intensively photographed and interviewed."

Lindsley scratched his diminutive beard. "Seems to me, Pierre, that we're getting away with murder. Plotnik really figured out the source of those radiations, and Monahan had the idea of suspecting the N.P.'s and setting out to catch one."

"Don't worry about them. They're getting their share of the glory."

"I suppose so. But right now what I want is a vacation from all scientific thought."

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— Mark Olson
December 2004

L(yon) Sprague de Camp

was one of the greats of fantasy and science fiction. He was present at the creation of modern SF in the 30s and continued to write until the 90s. He was a master of both fantasy and SF—as well as historical fiction and non-fiction on SF, ancient history, linguistics, biography, anthropology and technology.

De Camp was a master of humorous fantasy and was one of the few writers keeping heroic fantasy alive in the 50s and 60s; he was instrumental in getting Robert E. Howard's Conan back into print, and wrote numerous Conan stories of his own. His superb collaborations with Fletcher Pratt included the famous *Incompleat Enchanter* stories, Gavagan's Bar and several stand-alone novels.

An engineer by training, de Camp was an officer in the Naval Reserve doing engineering in WW II, and was a world-traveler for the rest of his life (he visited Easter Island in his late 80s). These travels formed the basis of much of his non-fiction writing.

De Camp was widely honored, winning both the Hugo and the Nebula as well as a variety of other awards. Besides being one of the major professional writers in the field, he was a fan of SF, regularly attending conventions, writing for fanzines and was one of the founders of the Hyborian Legion.

Bob Eggleton

is presently one of the most important artists in the sf and fantasy field. He has won 8 Hugos and 11 Chesleys, as well as often coming in tops in the *Analog, Asimov's, Locus,* and *SF Chronicle* readers' polls. NESFA has awarded him both the "Jack Gaughan Award for Emerging Artist" and the "E.E. Smith Award for Contributions to the Field of Imaginative Fiction" (aka The Skylark). Bob lives in Rhode Island with his wife, artist Marianne Plumridge, and hundreds of models and pictures of Godzilla.

"De Camp is an old pro...
he can be relied upon
to entertain
and amuse."
—Publisher's Weekly

"An established entertainer
conjures up old and new worlds...
There are trips in time—
a safari back to the
Upper Cretaceous and a
tyrannosaur too big to handle..."
—Kirkus

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